Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by:

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	ah
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـِ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsá	Moses
Dawūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Harūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibraḥīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Joseph	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Mary	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

Foreword

In this second edition of Volume 13 of Tafsir al-Mizan, we delve into the interpretation of verses 1 to 83 of Surah al-An'am (The Cattle). The initial publication of this volume was a collaborative effort led by WOFIS, with the esteemed translation entrusted to ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī. Regrettably, we mourn the passing of Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī on June 20th, 2002, after completing verse 41 of this Surah. It was only a decade later that his dedicated son, Sayyid Muhammad Akhtār Rizvī, took it upon himself to finalize the translation of the remaining portion of this volume.

Within the pages of this volume, several profound discussions await the reader. Firstly, it explores the topic of animals and their social structures from the perspective presented in the Qur'an. Additionally, there are two important discussions: one delves into the subject of command, emphasizing its exclusive attribution to God, while the other unravels the meaning and reality behind Divine Acts and Commands.

A pivotal point of focus in this volume is verse 59 of the Surah, where ʿAllāmah elucidates that the phrase "And with Him are the keys of the unseen" serves to underline the exclusive knowledge of the unseen possessed by the Almighty. This verse either conveys that the treasures of the unseen remain concealed from all but God or signifies that the keys to the unseen are known only to God. Thus, no other entity has access to these treasures, as they lack the knowledge of the keys necessary to unlock and utilize what lies within.

Towards the culmination of this volume, the narrative of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) is explored, offering a comprehensive account of his character while encompassing both Qur'anic, scientific, and historical perspectives.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who undertook the task of editing the first edition of this volume and have diligently contributed to the completion of this new edition. We eagerly anticipate that readers will receive this edition with enthusiasm and appreciation.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd
December, 2023

About the Translator

The late ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī stood as an exemplar of unwavering dedication to the cause of Islam. He was a sincere preacher and a dynamic scholar who left an indelible mark on the Islamic landscape, both during his tenure in Tanzania with the Bilāl Muslim Mission and upon his return to his homeland, India. His tireless efforts in propagating Islam are commendable.

ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī authored numerous books and booklets in English, Urdu, and Swahili, many of which have found their way into publication. Some titles have been translated into several languages, including French, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Hausa, and others, extending the reach of his valuable contributions to a global audience.

About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imām, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers, particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge.

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1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others. (Pub.)

A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Ja'far Khwānsārī (1313–80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Moseswī, known as "the mathematician." 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

'Allāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbah'ī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Moses, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, 'Allāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid 'Alī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qur'an to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qur'an, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i ri'alism* (Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism). This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts,

especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shi'a dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shi'ite Islam.* The 'Allāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

Chapter 6

Sūrah al-Anʾām

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Verses 1-3

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the Unity of the Almighty God in its general meaning: that the human being has a Lord Who is the Lord of the whole universe; every thing originates from Him and to Him returns every thing; He sent the messengers as bearers of good tidings, and warners (of chastisement), and through them He guides His servants to His true religion. And that is why the majority of its verses came in form of arguments against the polytheists about monotheism, prophethood and resurrection. Of course, it also contains brief description of religious (*shar'ī*) obligations and prohibitions of the faith.

Its context—as inferred by meditation—is one and synchronized, with no indication in it of any division which could have shown that it was revealed in piecemeal form. This proves that this chapter was revealed all together; and that it is a Meccan chapter as it appears fromits context in which most of the talk, rather the whole talk, is addressed to the polytheists (of Mecca).The exegetes (of the Qur'an) and the narrators (of ḥadīth) agree that this chapter was revealed at Mecca, except for six verses which some of them say were of Medina period, and they are: *And they do not assign to Allah the attributes dueto Him...* (6:91–93) and, *Say: "Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you..."* (6:151–3).

Some have said that the entire chapter is of Meccan period except for two verses 6:151–2. Others have said that it is wholly of Meccan period except two verses which were revealed at Medina about a Jew, who had said: *Allah has not revealed any thing to a mortal...* (6:91). Someone said that the whole chapter is of Meccan period except one verse which was revealed at Medina, and that is: *And even if We had sent down to them the angels...* (6:111).

There is, however, no contextual proof for any of the above views as

we have explained earlier that this chapter has a single theme and its verses are all well-connected; and we shall further elaborate upon it according to our ability. It has been narrated from the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt as well as (some companions like) Ubay, ʿIkrimah and Qatādah that it was revealed all together at Mecca.

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِى خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ ۖ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١﴾

(6:1) All praise is due to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light; yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord

The chapter begins with God's praise and it is like an introduction to the main theme of explaining the meaning of monotheism—the praise contains the gist of the chapter and from it stems the detailed arguments; it further shows astonishment (regarding the polytheists) and blames them for setting up equals with their Lord and doubting His Unity. This all serves as an introduction to what follows of general admonition and threat.

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In these three verses of praise, God points to the true knowledge on which the religious call rests—which is like the substance of the sharīʾah—and it is divided into three systems: 1) The universal system of existence (in the first verse); 2) The system of man as far as his existence is concerned (in the second verse); and 3) The system of human behavior (in the third verse).

The sum total of the three verses taken together is to praise the Sublime God for having created the macrocosm in which the man lives; and for having created the microcosm (that is, the existence of man himself who is limited in the sense that he begins with the clay and ends with the decreed term); and for having knowledge of man's inner (thoughts) as well as his spoken words, and whatever he earns (by his deeds).

The third verse: *And He is Allah in the heavens and in the earth*, aims at elaborating the theme of the preceding two verses, and paves the way to explain that He knows man's inner (thoughts) and spoken words, and whatever the soul earns.

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The phrase: "...Who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light", points to the universal system of creation on the basis of which things, with their multitude and numerousness, are managed.

Our world with its firm operating system is confined to the earth which is encompassed by the firmament with its spacious- ness, then He manages it through light and darkness; and on these two revolves the hand mill of this manifest world in its evolvement and perfection. Here always one thing is born from another thing, one thing changes into another thing, one thing appears while the other disappears, a new thing is made and the old one decays; and with conjunction of all these multifarious movements comes into being the universal great movement which bears the load of the things and proceeds with it to its destination.

The term: *al-ja'l* (to make) in: *made the darkness and the light* means: *al-khalq* = to create. However, *al-khalq* is derived from *khalaq al-thawb* (sewing the dress) in which composition of an item from various components is part of its meaning, as opposed to the term *al-ja'l* = to make (something without using components). Perhaps for this reason "to create" has been reserved for the heavens and the earth since they consist of a multitude of components as opposed to the darkness and the light, and hence the use of "to make" for them. And God knows better.

(Keeping the English idiom in mind, we have translated *al-ẓulumāt* as 'darkness' in singular even though the word: *al-ẓulumāt* itself is plural.) The Qur'an has used the term *al-ẓulumāt* in plural form while it has used the term *al-nūr* (the light) as singular. Perhaps it is so because darkness appears only in comparisonto light, as it is the absence of light in a thing that should be illuminated.

As such it has varying degrees depending on the changing grades of proximity and distance from the light. Not so the light, because it is an existential phenomenon and does not appear in comparison to the darkness which is non-existence. Even if one imagines its multiplication in relation to the darkness, in reality, it does not augment or multiply.

... yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord: It expresses astonishment mingled with blame. Surely God, the Glorified, by the creation of the heavens and the earth, and by making of the darkness and the light, is solitary in divinity and alone in god-ship, nothing is like Him, nor is anything His partner. It is really strange that the disbelievers in spite of their confession that creation and management belong to God in the real sense of ownership, and not to the idols that they have taken as gods, they have set up equals with Him from their idols and images which they think are equal to their Lord; thus they think that they are His equals; so they

have to be blamed for it.

The above statement makes clear the reason of using *thumma* (then, yet) which indicates delay. It is as though the speaker, when he described that God is alone in creation and invention, and is solitary in divinity and godship, then stated the claim of the polytheists that these stones and wood used for carving idols were equals to the Lord of the universe. So, astonishment overwhelmed him for a moment and prevented him from speaking, then he again proceeded in his talk and pointed to the cause of his momentary silence—that astonishment had stopped him from continuing in his speech, so He said: "Yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord."

هُوَ الَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا ۖ وَأَجَلٌ مُسَمًّى عِنْدَهُۥ ۖ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ ۝٢

(6:2) He it is Who created you from clay, then He decreed a term; and the named term is with Him; still you doubt.

After describing the creation of the macrocosm in the previous verse, this verse points to the creation of the human microcosm. It explains that God created the man and manages his affairs by decreeing a term for his physical abode in this world; and, therefore, his existence is limited between the clay and between the decreed terms which accompany death as God says: *Every soul must taste of death, then to Us you shall be brought back* (29:57). (Human species indeed begun from the clay but continued through marriage and sexualintercourse as God says: *and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract, of water held in light estimation* (32:7–8).)

Possibly the 'term' may be taken to mean the return to Almighty God through resurrection since it looks like the Qur'an mostly countsthe life of purgatory (*barzakh*) as part of the worldly life, as is inferredfrom the apparent meaning of the verse: *He will say: "How manyyears did you tarry in the earth?" They will say: "We tarried a day or part of a day, but ask those who keep account." He will say: "You did tarry but a little—had you but known* (it)," (23:112–4). Also, He says: *And at the time when the Hour shall come, the guilty shall swear* (that)*they did not tarry but an hour; thus are they ever turned away. And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: "Certainly you tarriedaccording to the ordinance of Allah, till the Day of Resurrection, so*

this is the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know,(30:55–56).

The meaning of 'term' has been kept vague by using it as a commonnoun in the phrase: *then He decreed a term*; it indicates that it is unknown to man, and there is no way to know it through normal way.

... ***and the named term is with Him:*** To name a term means to specify it. Indeed it is an established custom to mention the term in agreements and loans and so on. It means the agreed upon time or the end of the time; and it is (the same meaning of) the named term. God says: *when you deal with each other in contracting a debt for a fixed time, then write it down,* (2:282); it means the end of the agreed upon time. Likewise, God says: *Whoever hopes to meet Allah, the term appointed by Allah will then most surely come* (29:5). Also, He says inthe story of Moses and Jethro (Shu'ayb): *He said: "I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on condition that you should serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will..." He said: "This shall be* (an agreement) *between me and you; whichever of the two terms I fulfil, there shall be no wrong-doing to me..."* (28:27–28). Here 'term' means the completion of the agreed upon term.

Apparently the expression *'Ajal* (term' (by itself) in the sense of the end of an agreed upon time (sprouting from the word in the meaning of the completion of the term) is a common usage (of thatterm): that is, they often said, 'the settled term', then they deleted the qualifying word and only mentioned 'term' in the sense of 'the settled term'. In his *al-Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says: "The term fixed for man's life is called *al-ajal*; they say: 'his *ajal* came near', that is, his death wasnear; its real sense is completion of the term."

In any case, it appears from the Divine Speech that "the term" and "the named term" mean the end of the life's span, not the whole life term, as is indicated by the Divine Word: *...the term appointed by Allah will then most surely come;...* (29:5).

It is clear from the above that there are two terms: "the vague term", and "the named term" that is with God. The latter never changes because of the phrase, *with Him*, and God has said: *...and what is with Allah is enduring...* (16:96); and it is the same determinedterm which does never change as Almighty God says: (Say:) "*... when their term comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before* (their time)*;*" (10:49).

The relationship of the named term to the unnamed term is that of unconditional and determined to the conditional and undetermined. The latter may possibly fail to materialize (if its conditions are unfulfilled),

contrary to the unconditional and determined which can never fail to occur.

Meditating on the preceding verses together with the verse: *...for every term there is a book; Allah erases and establishes what He pleases, and with Him is the basis of the Book* (13:38–39), shows that the named term is that which is written in: *the basis of the Book*; and the unnamed term is written in what we call "the tablet of erasure and affirmation." It shall be explained later that: *the basis of the Book* may be applied to the events which are established, that is, the events that depend on the perfect causes which do not fail to produce their effects, and "the tablet of erasure and affirmation" is applicable to the events that depend on incomplete causes which we often describe as "requirements" which may be overcome by some snags, preventing them from bringing about their effects.

The perfect and imperfect causes may be likened to the sun's degrees of illumination. We know that this night will certainly end after a few hours and that the sun will rise, and the face of the earth will brighten up. Yet it is possible that the sunrise will be simultaneously veiled by cloud or lunar eclipse or some other snag will appear to prevent the illumination; however if the sun shines over the earth and there is no hindrance between the two then the face of the earth is bound to illuminate.

Now, the illuminating effect of the sun is like "the tablet of erasure and affirmation" while it's rising on its time (with absence of any barrier between it and the earth) is like: the basis of the Book which is known as the Preserved Tablet.[1]

The special composition of the human body with the limited requirements of its limbs, demands that man should live his normal lifespan which is variably fixed at a hundred or a hundred-and-twenty years. For instance, this is what is written in the tablet of erasure and affirmation, yet, all the components of the universe are connected to and also influence the human existence; and sometimes the causes and the barriers that we cannot compute, interact with one another in a way that we do not comprehend, leading to the arrival of his death before the end of his natural lifespan; and this is what is called sudden death.

This makes it easy to imagine the need, according to the divine order,

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1 For further elaboration on: *Lawḥu al-Maḥw wa al-Ithbāt* = 'The Tablet of Erasure and Affirmation', and: *Lawḥu al-Maḥfūẓ* = 'The Preserved Tablet', in English, see the translator's book Justice of God, chap.4. (Ed.)

of both the 'named' as well as the 'unnamed' terms; and that the ambiguity of the unnamed term does not go contrary to the fixed point of the named term; and that the unnamed and named terms sometimes correspond, and sometimes are at variance, and that which takes place is the named term.

This is what is inferred from meditation on the verse: *then He decreed a term; and there is a term named with Him.*

The exegetes have written strange explanations for the two terms mentioned in the verse. For example:

(1) First term refers to the period between creation and death, and the second one to the period between death and resurrection. This has been mentioned by several ancient exegetes, and perhaps it is narrated from Ibn 'Abbās.

(2) First term is the term of the people of the world until they die, and the second is the term of the next world which has no end. This opinion is ascribed to Mujāhid, Jubbā'ī and others.

(3) First term is the time of those who have passed away, and the second is the time of those who have remained or will come later. Thisis attributed to Abū Muslim.

(4) First term refers to the sleep and the second refers to the death.

(5) Both terms refer to the same thing; and the noble verse should beread as: then He decreed a term and this is the named term with Him.

But I do not think that the paucity of time and brevity of life allow us to engage in discussing the validity or otherwise of these views.

... still you doubt: *al-Miryah* (doubt). In these two verses, the pronoun turns from third person to the second person. The first verse mentions creation and its management in the general sense, and it concludes that the disbelievers should not have set up equals with God; for this purpose it was appropriate to mention them in the third person. The next verse, however, deals with the creation and management specifically in case of man, and so it was proper for the speaker—the astonished and the censurer—to confront them in second person, and censure them by defying them directly. It is as though He says: You were oblivious of the creation and purpose of the heavens and the earth, and making of the darkness and the light, therefore We excused you for it since it was a general matter and it was possible to be oblivious of what it demands; but what is your excuse in doubting about Him Who created you, decreed a term for you and with Whom is the named term?

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(6:3) And He is Allah in the heavens and in the earth; He knows your secret and your open, and He knows what you earn.

The preceding two verses describe creation and management of the universe in general and of the man specifically. Hence it is enough to realize that God is the God alone who has no partner in His creation and management. But these disbelievers have affirmed other gods and different intercessors for various aspects of management; for example, god of life, god of sustenance, god of terra firma, god of sea and so on. Likewise, for various species, nations and different groups like god of skies, god of this nation and god of that group. So, He negated all this by His Word: "He is God in the heavens and in the earth."

So, this verse is similar to the Divine Word: *And He it is Who is God in the heavens and God in the earth; and He is the Wise, the Knowing* (43:84). It proves that His divinity overwhelms the heavens and the earth without any difference or limitation. This sentence elaborates what has been said earlier and also it paves the way forwhat is to follow below.

He knows your secret and your open and He knows what you earn: Secret and open are two opposites and they are the adjectives for our actions; their 'secret' is what they did secretly, and their 'open' means what they did openly without concealing it.

"What they earn" refers to the psychological dimension of what a man earns through his secret and open activities, be they good or evil. As you know, the secret and open which are mentioned here are two formal attributes of the external actions; and what they earn is a psychological and inner condition which is found with souls; so they are different in aspects of their appearance as well as substance. Probably the difference of the things known has caused the repetition of the word 'knowing' in these two phrases.

This verse paves the way for the theme of messengership and resurrection that is to come soon. As God knows whatever man does secretly or openly, and as He knows what he earns for his soul be it good or bad, and as He brings up and manages the man's affairs, it was for Him to send a messenger with a religion which He would legislate for guidance of the people contrary to what the idolaters say that there was no need of prophethood,

as God says: *Surely on Us is to show the way* (92:12).

Likewise, as God knows all the actions and their consequences in the soul of the man, it was for Him to take their accounts on the day that will not spare any one among them, as God says: *Or shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief makers in the earth? Orshall We make those who are pious like the wicked?* (38:28).

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Examining Narrations

(1) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain from al-Ḥasan b. ʿAli b. Abī Ḥamzah who said that Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, said: "Surely the chapter of *al-An'ām* was revealed all together, escorted by seventy thousand angels until it was revealed to Muḥammad; so glorify it and respect it, because therein is the Name of God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, in seventy places[1]; and if the people knew what (reward) was there in reciting it, they would not leave it." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it as a *mursal* ḥadīth from the same Imām.

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(2) al-Qummī narrated through his father from al-Ḥusayn b. Khālid from al-Riḍā who said: *al-An'ām* was revealed all together, escorted by seventy thousand angels, they had soft humming sound of *al-tasbīḥ*, *al-tahlīl* and *al-takbīr*;[2] so whoever recites it, they shall seek pardon for him till the Day of Resurrection." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: It has also been narrated in *Majma' al-bayān*, from al-Ḥusayn b. Khālid from the Imām; but the phrase: 'shallseek pardon for him' is changed to: 'shall recite *tasbīḥ* for him'.

(3) Abū Baṣīr said: "I heard Abū ʿAbdillāh saying: 'Surely the chapter of *al-An'ām* (ch. 6) was revealed all together, escorted by seventy thousand angels when it was revealed to the Messenger of God; so glorify it and revere it, because in it there is the Name of God, to Whom belong Might, and Majesty, in seventy places; and if people knew the merit in its recital they would not leave it.' " (*al-Tafsīr*,

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1 It is an approximation. To be exact, the name has come in eighty-seven places. (Trans.)

2 *al-Tasbīḥ*, *al-tahlīl* and *al-takbīr* refer to phrases used to sing the praise of God by reciting *subhān Allah, lā ilāha illa Allah, Allahu akbar*. (Trans.)

al-ʿAyyāshī,)

(4) al-Ṭabrisī says that Ubayy b. Ka'b narrates a ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet who said: "(The chapter of) *al-An'ām* was revealed to me all together, seventy thousand angels were escorting it; they had soft humming sound of *tasbīḥ* and *taḥmīd*; so whoever recites it, those seventy thousand angels will pray for him for one day and night for each verse of *al-An'ām*." (*Jawāmi' al-jāmi'*)

Author's comment: It has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*from the Holy Prophet through various chains of narrators.(al-Suyūṭī)

(5) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain from Ibn Maḥbūb, from Abū Ja'far al-Aḥwal, from Salām b. al-Mustanīr, from Abū Ja'far that he said: "Surely God created the Garden before creating the Fire, and created obedience before creating disobedience, and created mercy before wrath, and created good before evil, and created the earth before the sky, and created life before death, and created the sun before the moon, and created the light before the darkness." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: That the light was created before darkness is clear in meaning, inasmuch as the darkness is a non-existent entity (and exists only) in relation to the light. (In other words, darkness is nothing but absence of light itself.)

As for ascribing the process of creation to obedience and disobedience, it does not necessary negate free will; because negation of free will would mean negation of obedience and disobedience themselves, and then there would be no correct reason of ascribing them to creation. Rather it means that God owns obedience and disobedience as He owns all those things which come under His ownership. How is it possible that a thing falls within His ownership and then be beyond His encompassment and authority, and isolated from His will and permission?

Moreover, there is no proof that 'creation' is confined to original invention and manufacturing in the sense that God directly invents all things whose creation is ascribed to Him; so that when it is said that God has created justice or murder, it means that the will power of man is negated and He becomes directly responsible for justice or murder by removing any intermediate factor in between. (No, there is no proof for such a notion.) Understand it; and a detailed discussion on this subject was given in the first

volume of this book.[1]

By a similar explanation, the meaning of ascribing creation to good and evil, whether in universal matters or in human actions, will also be clear.

As for obedience being created before disobedience and good being created before evil, this too may be explained the way creation of light before darkness has been explained, because the relation between them is that of negation and potentiality, and the negative depends in its happening on the potentiality. The creation of life before death also becomes clear in the same way. It also proves that the mercy was created before the wrath, because mercy is related to obedience and good, and wrath is related to disobedience and evil, and obedience and good happen before disobedience and evil.

As for the creation of the earth before the skies, the following verses prove it: *(Say) "...Who created the earth in two days..." Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it is a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth: "Come both willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come willingly." So He ordained them seven heavens in two days...* (41:9–12).

As for the creation of the sun being prior to that of the moon, that can be easily inferred from the verses: (*I swear*) *by the sun and its heat, and the moon when it follows it* (91:1–2). The modern natural sciences lean towards the view that the earth was split from the sun, and the moon was split from the earth.

(6) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad, from al-ʿAmrakī b. ʿAli, from al-ʿUbaydī, from Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from ʿAlib. Jaʿfar that Abū Ibrahim said: "Every prayer has two times, and the time of the Friday is the midday." Then he recited the verse: *All praise is due to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light; yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord.* (He said): "They consider the darkness and thelight, and the injustice and the justice to be equal to one another respectively." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: This is another meaning of the verse; and it is based on making the phrase, *with their Lord*, related to the word, *disbelieve*, instead of, *set up equals*.

(7) al-Kulaynī narrates from Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad from Ibn Faḍḍāl from Ibn Bakīr from Zurārah from

1 See *al-Mīzān*. (Eng. transl.), vol.1. (Trans.)

Ḥumrān from Abū Jaʿfar. Ḥumrān said: "I asked about the Word of God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty: *then He decreed a term; and there is a named term with Him*." He (Imām) said: "They both are two terms: the determined term and the deferred term." (*al-Kāfī*)

(8) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Ḥumrān, he said: "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about the Word of God: *then He decreed a term; andthere is a named term with Him.* He (Imām) said: "They both are two terms: the deferred term (in which) God does what He pleases andthe determined term." (*al-Tafsīr*)

(9) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Masʾadah b. Ṣadaqah, from Abū ʿAbdillāh about His Word: *then He decreed a term; and there isa named term with Him.* He (Imām) said: "The unnamed term is the deferred term, He advances it whenever He pleases; and the named term is the one which comes down from what He wishes from the Night of Destiny to the similar night (next year)." Then he (Imām) said: "So this is the Word of God: *When their term comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before* (their time)." (*ibid.*)

(10) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Ḥumrān who narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh. Ḥumrān said: "I asked him about the Word of God: *a term; and there is a named term with Him.*" He (Imām) said: "The named (term) is what has been mentioned to the angel of death in that night (that is, the Night of Destiny); and it is that (about which) God has said: *so when their term comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before* (their time); and it is that which is mentioned to the angel of death in the Night of Destiny; and the other (term), He has (His) will in it, if He wishes He advances it, and if He wishes He defers it." (*ibid*.)

Author's comment: Other traditions narrated from the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt convey the same meaning; and what they explain ofthe meaning of named and unnamed terms is the same which has been inferred earlier from the noble verses.

(11) There is in *al-Tafsīr* that ʿAli b. Ibraḥīm said: "My father narrated to me from al-Naḍr b. Suwayd from al-Ḥalabī from ʿAbdullāh b. Muskān that Abū ʿAbdillāh said: 'The decreed term is the determined one which God has decreed and fixed, and the named one

is the one in which is *al-badā'*, He advances what He wishes and defers what He wishes; and there is no advancing nor deferring in the fixed one.' " (al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: One of the narrators has made a mistake, and has reversed the meaning by explaining the named and unnamed termswith the meaning of the other; moreover, the tradition does not aim to explain the verse; therefore (with this explanation) there is not much difficulty in accepting it.

(12) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from al-Ḥuṣayn from Abū ʿAbdillāh about His Word: He decreed a term; and there is a named term with Him. He said that Abū ʿAbdillāh said: "The first term is that which He conveys to the angels, messengers and prophets, and the named term is that which God has kept hidden from the creatures." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: The meaning of the tradition is apparently against that of the preceding traditions. However, it is possible to infer from his (Imam's) word: He conveyed it, that God has given them the basis from which unnamed terms can be discovered; but when it comes to the named term, He has not given preponderance to any one over His knowledge in the sense that He might have conveyed to him a light with which every named term is discovered whenever he wants it. Of course, if the Sublime describes it to the angel of death or to His prophets and messengers when He wishes; so that is like the unseen whose knowledge is reserved for the Sublime, yet He reveals some of it to whom He chooses from the messengers when He so wishes.

(13) It is narrated from Ibn Bābawayh through his chain, from Muthannā al-Ḥannāṭ from Abū Jaʿfar (I think it refers to Muḥammad b. al-Nuʾmān) that he said: "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh about the Word of God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty: *And He is Allah in the heavens and in the earth.* He (Imām) said: "Likewise He is in every place." I said: "By Himself?" He said: "Woe unto you! Surely the places are measures; so when you say: In a place by Himself, it will be necessary for you to say in the measures and other than that. But He is different from His creation, He comprehends what He has created, in knowledge and power, comprehension and authority; His knowledge of what is in the earth is not less than His knowledge on what is in the heavens. Nothing is far from Him, and the things are equal for Him in knowledge and power, in authority, possession and will." (*Tafsīr al-burhān*)

Verses 4–11

This passage points to the disbelievers' rejection of the truth with which the Messenger was sent, and shows their continued refutation of truth and mockery of the divine signs; then it admonishes them and warns them (of its consequences); finally it responds to some of their imprudent talks in which they have rejected the clear truth.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤﴾

(6:4) And there does not come to them any sign of the signs of their Lord but they turn aside from it:

It points to the characteristic of arrogance which is deeply rooted in their souls, and has produced in them the aversion for the signs which lead to the truth. Thus, they do not look at any sign and are indiscriminately heedless of all. This is because they have rejected the ultimate goal, that is, the truth, as God says: *So they have indeed rejected the truth when it came to them...* (6:5)

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٥﴾

(6:5) So they have indeed rejected the truth when it came to them; therefore the truth of what they mocked at will come to them.

This is a warning and threat (to those who reject the signs of God) because what they mock at is the truth; and the truth refuses until to appear one day and emerge from the realm of news to the realm of reality. God says: *...and Allah blots out the falsehood and confirms the truth with His words...* (42:24). *They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse. He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the true religion, that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them, though the polytheists may be averse,* (61:8–9). Also, He said in a parable: *...thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it tarries in the earth...* (13:17).

It is known that when the truth will appear the believer and the unbeliever will not be equal in its handling, nor the one who was humble to it and the one who mocked at it. God says: *And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the messengers, most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones. Therefore turn away from them till a time, and* (*then*) *see them, so they too shall see. What! Would they then hasten on Our chastisement? But when it shall descend in their court, evil shall then be the morning of the warned ones* (37:171–7).

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٦﴾

(6:6) Do they not consider how many a generation We have destroyed before them, whom We had established in the earth as We have not established you, and We sent the clouds pouring rain on them in abundance, and We made the rivers to flow beneath them, then We destroyed them on account of their faults and raised up after them another generation.

al-Rāghib says: "*al-Qarn* translated here as generation, means a people who are together in the same era, and its plural is *qurūn*." Also, he said: "God said: *'And We sent the clouds pouring rain on them in abundance'* (6:6). *...He will send on you clouds pouring down abundance of rain...* (11:52). The term *midrāra* (abundance of rain) comes from *al-darr* and *al-dirrah* which literally means milk; and it is symbolically used for rain just as the names of the camel and its qualities are used in metaphorical meanings. So, it is said: '*Li 'llāhi durrahu*—(lit: his achievement is due to God) your udder flowed copiously;' from it is borrowed the usage: dark pass."

... whom We had established in the earth as We have not established you: Here the talk turns from third person to the second; apparently its reason is avoidance of confusion regarding the reference point of the pronoun. Had there been no change in the phrase: "as We have not established you", the context would have given the idea that the pronoun refers to those mentioned as 'whom' in "whom We had established in the earth"; otherwise the real context in the opening of the chapter is of the third person. We have

explained earlier the change which is found in the phrase: *He it is Who created you from clay* (6:2).

... then We destroyed them on account of their faults: This proves that evil deeds and sins have some bearing on afflictionsand general calamities. There are many verses conveying this meaningas there are verses which prove that good deeds and obedience havean impact on bestowal of bliss and showering of blessings.

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾

(6:7) And if We sent to you a writing on a paper, then they had touched it with their hands, certainly those who disbelieve would have said: "This is nothing but clear enchantment."

It shows that the arrogance of the polytheists has reached a stage where nothing would help them to come to the right path; even if We sent to them a message written on a paper which they could touch with their hands and perceive it with their sight and hearing, and their sensory perceptions supported one another yet they would only say that it is nothing but a clear enchantment. Therefore one should not care about their senseless talk: ... *and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read*, (17:93).

'Writing' is used as a common noun in the phrase: "a writing on a paper," because this writing or book has been revealed in a piecemeal and gradual manner, and it is qualified with "on a paper" in order that it may be nearer to what they had demanded; also then it would be further from their thought that the verses revealed to the Holy Prophet are his own composition written by him, and not something that was revealed upon him through the Faithful Spirit, as God says: *The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart that you may be of the warners in plain Arabic language,* (26:193–5).

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(6:8) And they say: "Why has not an angel been sent down to him?" And had We sent down an angel, the matter would have certainly

been decided and then they would not have been respited.

Their talk: "Why has not an angel been sent down to him?" is an incitement to show his inability. The Holy Prophet had informed them that the verses which he recited to them were brought to him by a noble angel who comes down from God; as God says: *Most surely it is the word of an honoured messenger, the possessor of strength, having an honourable place with the Lord of the Throne, one* (*to be*) *obeyed, and faithful in trust,* (81:19–21). There are many similar verses.

Their demand for an angel to be sent to them could be for one of the two reasons as God describes in His speech:

One: That the Holy Prophet should bring to them the chastisement which he had threatened them with; as God says: *But if they turn aside, then say: "I have warned you of a scourge like the scourge of ʿĀd and Thamūd."* (41:13). Also, He says: *Say: "It is a message of importance ...Naught is revealed to me save that I am a plain warner* (38:67–70).

And since the coming of the angel would mean changing the realm of the unseen into the realm of the seen, then there would be no escape if they had not yet believed—and they would never believe because of their disposition towards arrogance—but to judge them justly and that would necessitate their death as He said: *And had We sent down an angel, the matter would have certainly been decided and then they would not have been respited.*

Moreover, the humans who are tied to the material world and are settled in the earthly abode are unable to see the angels if they were to be sent down to them and to mingle with them, because their environment is different from that of the angels. So, if humans were to verge into the angels' environment, it will not be possible except by them transferring from the low physical level to the metaphysical level, and that simply means death. As God says: *And those who do not hope for Our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or* (*why*) *do we not see our Lord?" Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted in great revolt. On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: "It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited."* (25:21–22). This refers to the day of death or even later aspects, as is seen in the next Divine Word: *The dwellers of the garden shall on thatday be in a better abiding place and a better resting place* (25:24).

The Almighty God says after it (and the context apparently shows that it is the last day): *And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with*

the clouds, and the angels shall be sent down a sending. The Kingdom on that day shall rightly belong to the Beneficent God, and a hard day shall it be for the unbelievers (25:25–26). Perhaps they meant the same when they said: *... or bring Allah and the angels face to face* (*with us*); (17:92).

In short, the words: *And had We sent down an angel, the matter would have certainly been decided...*, is the reply to their demand that an angel should be sent down to punish them. As such, there should beadded to it what God has promised this *ummah* that punishment would be deferred from them, as the verses of the Chapter Yūnus point to it: *And every nation had a messenger; so when their messengercame, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shallnot be dealt with unjustly. And they say: "When will this threat come about, if you are truthful?" Say: "I do not control for myself any harm,or any benefit except what Allah pleases; every nation has a term..." And they ask you: "Is that true?" Say: "Yea! By my Lord! It is most certainly the truth, and you will not escape."* (10:47–53). There are many verses of this meaning; we shall thoroughly describe them in another chapter, God willing. And God says: *And Allah was not going to chastise them, while you were among them, nor is Allah going to chastise them while yet they ask for forgiveness;* (8:33).

The verse, in short, indicates that they are demanding descent of an angel but We shall not respond to it because if an angel came down the matter will be decided and they will not be given a respite. God, however, has willed to give them some respite to a certain time, so that they should plunge in what they are doing until they meet this day of theirs and God will certainly give them in full what they are asking for, then God will decide between them.

The verse may possibly be interpreted in another way: They ask for descending of an angel in order that it should be a sign, not that he should bring chastisement. Then the reply would mean: Even if an angel came down to them, they will not believe because of the arrogance and hatred of truth which are deeply rooted in them, and then it will be decided between them and they will not be given respite—and this is not what they want.

Two: That an angel should be sent down to them in order to carry out all the burdens of the mission of inviting them to God instead of the Holy Prophet; or he should be accompanied by a messenger like him confirming his call and to be a witness for his truth, as is seen in their talk as quoted by God: *And they say: "What is the matter with this messenger that he eats food and goes about in the marts; why has not an angel been sent down to him, so*

that he should have been a warner with him?" (25:7). They meant that the person who has been sent as a messenger by God, it is beneath his dignity that he should be like the people in their habits, example, eating of food, and going to and fro in markets to earn his livelihood; rather it is necessary that he should have a heavenly life and angelic living which is devoid of hardships and discomforts of material life. Thus he should either have visible sign of his call or an angel should come down to him from the heaven to become a warner with him. In this way, there would be no doubt in truthfulness of his call and reality of his mission.

It is this idea which is replied to in the next verse: *And if We hadmade him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man...*

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا يَلْبِسُونَ ﴿٩﴾

(6:9) And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused.

al-Labs means to hide with a cover what must be kept hidden because of its ugliness or because it needs hiding; *al-lubs* means covering of the truth; and it seems that the meaning is metaphorical, and the root is the same.

al-Rāghib says in his *al-Mufradāt*:

> "He wore the cloth, that is, he hid himself with it, and dressed someone else... The root meaning of *al-lubs* is to hide a thing, and it is used in various meanings: it is said, 'I confused his affair on him.' (God) says: "We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused." Also, He said: *Anddo not confuse the truth with the falsehood,* (2:42). *Why do you confound the truth with the falsehood...?* (3:70). *Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with iniquity...* (6:82); and it is said: 'There is confusion in this matter, that is dubiousness.'"

...what they make confused: Its object is deleted; probably it denotes generality; its full meaning will be as follows: That which the disbelievers confuse themselves about; it may mean, confusion ofsomeone over his own self, and confusion of the one over another person.

As for their confusing others, then it is like the corrupt scholars who mingle the truth with the falsehood because of the ignorance of their followers; and like corrupt leaders who mingle the truth with the falsehood

because of the weakness of their followers just as Pharaoh had said to his people (as God quotes him): "*O my people! Is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And these rivers flow beneath me; do you not then see? Nay! I am better than this fellow, who is contemptible, and who can hardly speak distinctly: But why have not bracelets of gold been put upon him, or why have not come with him angels as companions?*" *So he incited his people to levity and they obeyed him...* (43:51–54). Also, he said: "*I do not show you aught but that which I see* (*myself*)*, and I do not make you follow any but the right way.*" (40:29).

And as for their confusing their own selves, it was by their imagination that the truth was falsehood and falsehood was truth. Then they continued on their falsehood, for, although man by nature distinguishes truth from falsity—the nature made by God in which He has made men; and his soul is inspired to what is right and what is wrong—yet he prefers the side of base desire, and supports the spirit of desire and anger in his soul; This creates in his soul the trend of arrogance against truth and superiority over reality; thus his soul is attracted to it. It is dazzled of its misdeed, and it does not leave him free to turn towards truth and to heed its call; at this juncture he embellishes his misdeed and knowingly confuses truth with falsehood. As God says: *Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye,* (45:23). Also, He has said: *Say:* "*Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in* (*their*) *deeds?* (*These are*) *they whose labour is lost in this world's life and they think that they are well-versed in skill of the work of hands.*" (18:103–4).

This explains how man goes astray in an issue even though he knows it; and, therefore, it cannot be said that man's confusing the truth with falsehood means that he proceeds to a necessary harm (rather he thinks it is good for him)—since that won't be (rationally) unacceptable. Moreover, if we deeply look at our own condition and do justice with it, we shall find in ourselves many bad habits of whose evil we are sure, yet we do not leave them just because they have become deep-rooted in us. This is nothing except becoming astray with knowledge and confusing the truth with falsity in the soul; taking delight in imaginary pleasures and infatuation with it forgetting the firmness on truth and practicing it; may God help us to seek His pleasures.

In any case, the Divine Word: "And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man..." answers their demand that an angel should be sent down to them as a warner, so that they may believe in him.

In short, it means that this place is the abode of choice; man does not acquire his real blessing and happiness except through proceeding on the path of choice and earning for or against himself what benefits him or harms him; and proceeding on either path (which he selects for himself) is affirmed by God.

God says: *Surely We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful* (76:3). So, it is guidance and showing of the way, so that man may choose what he chooses for himself, either going onto the right path or deviating from it, without being compelled to take this or that path. In fact, he sows for himself and then reaps what he had sowed. God says: *And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for; and that his striving shall soon be seen; then shall he be rewarded for it with the fullest reward*, (53:39–41). So, man does not get except what he strives for; if it is good God shows it to him, and if it is evil, He affirms it to him. He says: *Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will give him more of that again; and whoever desires the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the hereafter he has no portion,* (42:20).

In short, this Divine Call would not be meaningful except when it is based on human choice without compulsion and coercion. There is no escape therefore from the fact that the messenger who was to bring the divine message must be one of the people who speaks their language; so that they would choose for themselves happiness by obedience, and misfortune by disobedience, without putting any compulsion on them to accept the call through a heavenly sign which would force them to it—although He has power to do so, as He says: *Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe. If We please, We should send down upon them a sign from the heavens so that their necks should stoop to it,* (26:3–4).

So, if God was to send down to them an angel messenger, it was rationally incumbent to make him a man like them, in order that the righteous should profit from their good deeds, and the evil doers should lose, since they would confuse truth with falsehood for themselves and for their followers just as they are confused with a human messenger; and God will affirm it and confuse for them what they have confused. God says: *...but when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside...* (61:5).

So, by sending down an angel messenger there would be no (added) benefit or effect more than that which was to accrue by sending down a human messenger, and so that would be futile. Thus the saying of the unbelievers: *Why has not an angel been sent down to him?* is a demand for a useless thing

from which no special or new effect would result based on their expectation. This is the meaning of the Divine Word: *And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused.*

The above explanation makes it clear that:

First: The issue of making the messenger an angel and making him a man depends on intellectual necessity of preserving the human will and choice in divine religious call, because if the angel was to be sent down in his heavenly form and the unseen was changed to the seen, it would have meant compulsion which is not appropriate with the call of choice.

Second: The verse only talks about the angel becoming a man; it does not elaborate whether it would happen by changing his essence of angelhood to that of humanness—which, various scholars say, is impossible—or by the angel's only taking on a human form, as the Spirit appeared before Maryam as a full-grown human being, or as they appeared to Abraham and Lot in the form of human guests.

Most of the verses speaking about the angels support the second alternative; yet the Divine Word: *And if We please, We could make among you angels to be successors in the land* (43:60), somewhat points to the first alternative. This topic has further details which should be looked for in another place.

Third: The Divine Word: "and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused," is of the genre of the words, *but when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside* (61:5). So, this divine misguidance for them took place after they preferred misguidance for themselves; it cannot be the initial misguidance which is not appropriate for God's holy divinity.

Fourth: "what they make confused" is of general sense; it covers their act of confusion for their own selves and also their act of confusion for others.

Fifth: The verse offers argument against them that even if an angel was sent down to them with the message, it would not help them in removing their bewilderment. It is because God would make that angel a man similar to the human messenger, and they will confuse themselves and indulge in doubt. The fact is that they are making this demand only to get rid of the human messenger (in the form of a man) for changing their doubt into certainty (that he was not a true messenger); and when the angel will inevitably appear in the same form, they would not benefit from it at all.

Sixth: God has said: "We would certainly have made him a man," and

did not say, 'have made him a human,' (a term that includes man and woman both): it is said that this expression shows that a messenger cannot be but a man; it is also indicates that this "making" would be by the angel taking on the human form, not that his essence would change into that of a man, as has been said.

Most of the exegetes have explained the verse in this way: The human being who demanded that an angel be send down did not have power to look at the angel in his true form because they are fully bound by the material world. Therefore, if an angel was sent down to them, he would have appeared to them as a fully developed human being. Consequently, the same confusion and doubt would have occurred to them as it appeared in case of the human messenger, and they would have not benefited from it at all.

This explanation does not answer the objection, even if we were to admit that an ordinary human being does not see the angels in their true forms, by relying on such verses as: *On the day when they shall see the angels, there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty...* (25:22).

And we say that because if it were impossible for a human being to see the angel in his original form, then the condition of various individuals would not have differed in being possible or impossible; whereas it has been narrated in the Sunnī and the Shī'ī traditions that the Holy Prophet had seen Gabriel in his original form twice, and God has power to enable all human beings (as He had enabled His Holy Prophet) so that all people could see the angels and believe in them. Thus, there is no problem in it from rational point of view, except the problem of compulsion; so this is the difficulty which should be resolved through this verse, as described earlier.

Likewise, seeing the angels in human shape is not concomitant with possibility of doubt and confusion. God tells us about Abraham and Lot that they saw the angels in human forms, and then they recognized them and had no doubt about them. Likewise, He informed about Maryam that she looked at the Spirit, and then knew him and had no doubt about him, nor was his affair confused to her. So, why it is not possible that all people should enjoy similar condition like the above-mentioned friends of God so that they could see the angels in human shape, then recognize them and be certain of them? But there remains a difficulty: Making the souls of all people similar to the souls of Abraham, Lot and Maryam makes it necessary to erase their natural tenets and to change their souls into purified and holy souls, and this leads us to the problem of compulsion; so compulsion is the problem that

makes the question of test and trial redundant; that's the problem which should be removed with the help of this verse, as described earlier.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

(6:10–11) And certainly messengers before you were mocked at, but that which they mocked at encompassed the scoffers among them Say: "Travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejecters.."

al-Ḥayq means staying, descending. al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> "It is said that its root is *ḥaqq*, then it was changed as in *zalla* and *zāla*; and (the phrase) *fa-azallahuma al-shayṭān* is recited, *fa-azālahuma*; and similarly, dhammahu and *dhāmahu*."

Their act of mocking the messengers was actually aimed at mockingthe divine punishment which the messengers were warning them thatit would come down and encompass them, and so the exact punishment that they had mocked at came down upon them. The first verse aims at pleasing the Holy Prophet and warning the polytheists; and the second verse is an admonition and advice.

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Verses 12–18

These verses argue against the polytheists regarding Unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*) and Resurrection (*al-ma'ād*); the first two verses contain proof of resurrection, and the remaining five discuss the issue of *al-tawḥīd* based on two types of arguments as will be explained shortly.

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ قُلْ لِلَّهِ ۚ كَتَبَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۚ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

(6:12) Say: "To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?" Say: "To Allah; He has ordained mercy on Himself; most certainly He will gather you on the Day of Resurrection—there is no doubt about it. (As for) those who have lost their souls, they will not believe."

Thus begins the proof of resurrection. It says in short that certainly God is the Owner of all that is in the heavens and in the earth; He has the authority to manage it in any way He wishes and wills. He is characterized with the attribute of mercy, and it means fulfilling the need of every needy and conveying every thing to what it deserves and bestowing it on him; and many of His servants including human beings are qualified for an eternal life, and deserve to get happiness in it; so He, according to His ownership and mercy, will soon manage their affairs by resurrecting them and bestowing on them what they truly deserve.

So, His Word, the Sublime: "To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?" contains one premise of the proof; and the phrase: *He has ordained mercy on Himself*, contains another premise, and the phrase: *And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and day*, is the third premise forming a part of the proof.

And His Word, the Sublime: "Say: 'To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?'...", direct the Holy Prophet to ask them about him who owns the heavens and the earth, and who manages them as he wishes

and no one can oppose him; and that is none but God without doubt, because all others, even the idols and the lords of idols (whom polytheists call (for help)) are like all other creatures, their creation and affairs (by hand of their builders eventually) end at God, and so He is the Owner of all that is in the heavens and the earth.

And since the subject of the question was clearly known to the questioner and the questioned both, and the opponents acknowledge that reality, so there was no need for a reply or verbal confession from the opposite party. Therefore, God directed the Holy Prophet to mention the reply which constitutes the completion of the proof without waiting for their reply.

Putting forth a question to the opponent and then also answering it are among the subtle styles which are used in argumentations. A benefactor admonishes the ungrateful beneficiary by asking: "Who fed you, gave you water and clothed you?" And then he himself answers: "It was I who did all this and was gracious to you, and yet you repay me with ingratitude?"

In short, this question and answer has affirmed that God is the absolute owner; He may manage the creatures in any way He wishes: by giving them life and sustenance, giving death and resurrecting; nothing can prevent Him from it, like the complexity of task, death, absence or disturbance, etc. With this, one premise of the proof is completed. And then another premise is attached to it: *He has ordained mercy on Himself.*

"***He has ordained mercy on Himself...**": al-Kitābah* (literally writing); here it means affirmation and a firm decree.

Since mercy—that is bestowal of blessing on one who deserves it, and conveying a thing to its due blessing and happiness—is among the Divine Attributes of action, it is appropriate to ascribe it to His affirmation. The meaning will be as follows: He has affirmed for Himself the mercy, bestowal of blessings and sending down the good to one who deserves it. There are other divine verses wherein writing has been described as an action of affirming: *Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My messengers* (58:21). *And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth! It is most surely the truth...* (51:23).

And as for the divine attributes of person, like life, knowledge and power, their attribution to affirmation is not correct at all (since those attributes were never separate from His person); and therefore it is not said: He has affirmed for himself life, knowledge and power.

The necessary consequence of His affirming mercy upon Himself as

explained earlier—is that He should complete His blessings on them by gathering them on the Day of Resurrection in order that He should recompense them for their words and deeds, and so that the believers should succeed and the others should suffer loss.

That is why He has added at the end—as the conclusion of the proof—*most certainly He will gather you on the Day of Resurrection there is no doubt about it*. Look how He has emphasized the theme by using *lām* of oath and *nūn* of emphasis (in *la-yajma'anna,* most certainly He will gather"), and the ending phrase: "there is no doubt about it." Then He pointed out that the profit on that day was reserved for the believers and the loss for the non-believers; and so He said: "(As for) those who have lost their souls, they will not believe."

The proof offered in this verse for resurrection is quite separate from the two proofs offered in the following verses: *And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve on account of the fire. Shall we treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who are pious like the wicked?* (38:27–28). These two verses present proofs of resurrection from the angle that the divine actions are not in vain; on the contrary, they have some purpose behind them; and from the angle that considering the believer and the unbeliever, and the pious and the impious as equals would be an injustice not worthy of the divine status. And since these two groups are not distinguishable in this world, there is need of another life in which the two sides are made distinct from one another through blessings and unhappiness. This line of argument is other than the one used in the present verse which leads to the conclusion through the path of mercy.

وَلَهُ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾

(6:13) And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and the day; and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

Dwelling in the night and the day denotes being in the condition of this natural world whose affairs are managed in the night and the day; and its system is run by coverage of light reflected from the brilliant sun, and the light's transmutation through proximity and distance, power and weakness, presence and absence and direction, etc.

So, the night and the day are the general environment in which main elements and their by-products are brought up based on a system in which every part and each entity is led to its final destination determined for it, and completes it in spirit and body.

As the living space, in general and in particular, has full effect on the life of the living being, for example a human being, who lives in a land, moves around in search of sustenance, and obtains his sustenance from what grows from it like grains and fruits, and what is raised in it like the animals, and drinks from its water, breathes its air, and he influences the conditions of its regions and is affected by them, and all parts of his body grow according to its measures—similarly, the night and the day have full impact in creation of what is created in them.

Man, among the things living in the night and the day, has been shaped by the divine will from compounding the elementary and composite parts in a particular shape whose existence is distinguished, in its creation as well as its survival, by a life based on a thoughtful cognizance and a will. These two factors prepare for him his inner emotional powers which compel him to attract the beneficial things and avert the harmful ones; and invite him to create a society in which are fashioned the details (of phenomenon) that we see—mutual understanding through languages, following of traditions, laws and habits in social and business dealings, and respecting general opinions and beliefs regarding good and evil, justice and injustice, obedience and disobedience, reward and punishment, and recompense and pardon.

As God, Glory be to Him, is the Creator of the night, the day and all that lives in them, and He is alone in their invention, therefore He owns whatever lives in the night and the day; and He is the true owner of all the night and day, and their inhabitants, including whatever follows their existence, e.g., various events, actions and words. He also owns the system that flows in the whole universe with its wonderful spaciousness. So, He very well hears our words, voices and signs; and very well knows our actions and deeds whether they are good or bad, just or unjust, helpful to others or hurtful, and whatever the soul earns of the happiness and misfortune.

How can He be ignorant of it when everything has appeared in His domain of ownership and by His permission? The existences of such types of issues like good and evil, justice and injustice, and obedience and disobedience; and also the languages that indicate the intended meanings—all these are matters of knowledge that cannot take place except on basis of

knowledge. It is for this reason that none of our actions can be called good or bad, obedience or disobedience except when we are aware of those deeds and understand their meanings. In the same way, a combined voice is not called 'speech' unless we know it and relate to its meaning.

Thus, how is it possible that a human being as a created being possesses knowledge of his own person while his ultimate owner (that is, God) to be ignorant and unaware of it? (Ponder on it thoughtfully).

It is God, Glory be Him, Who invented this universe, with its wonderful spaciousness, in its simple and elemental ingredients which are compounded with a system that astonishes the intellect. Then, He created us and made us inhabit the night and day, then He increased us and established among us the system of human society; then He guided us to invention of languages, and consideration of customs; and He is always with us and with all the causes, step by step, and proceeds with us, minute by minute; and controls the events which we cannot count, one after another.

When a man utters a speech, God put its meaning in his heart by inspiration, made the word flow on his tongue through His specification; conveyed his voice to the listener's ears by making him hear it, and it went with its meaning to his intellect through His preservation, and the meaning was understood by his cogitation through His education. Then He raised the thinker to agree with what the speaker has conveyed to him or to prevent him from it by creating a will to do it or an aversion to repulse him from it. And He, in all these stages which cannot be counted by fingers, is the leader, the motivator, the guide, the guard and the watcher. So, how can a man avoid believing that He, the Sublime, is the Hearing and the Knowing: *No where is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them nor* (*between*) *five but He is the sixth of them, nor less than that nor more but He is with them wherever they are; then He will inform of what they did on the Day of Resurrection; surely Allah is Cognizant of all things* (58:7).

Likewise, (God is fully aware) when one of us does an action, whether good or bad; (He is cognizant of every stage of our creation:) a man is born from a father and a mother, they give birth to him under the watch of free choice and will; and he has reached them after treading on a distant path and unmeasured span of time, through the loins of active factors and the wombs of passive factors, until he ends in a situation that God knows better; and the Glorified God, in whose grasp is the earth and in whose hand is the heavens, was transferring him by His will from one lap to another until the

person reached this world, the place of free will. Then He remained with him in one station after another by divine permission, until he came up to the real world and took his place in the abode of the day and night; after that he continues to flow in the chain (of cause and effect) that impact various parts of the universe like one of the flowing causes while all along, the Glorified God, was a witness on him and encompassed him. So, how is it possible that He, the Glorified, should be oblivious of a thing of this type? *Does He not know, Who has created? And He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware* (67:14).

It is clear from the above that the phrase: "and He is the Hearing, the Knowing", is like the result of the phrase: "And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and the day."

Although the Hearing and the Knowing are counted among the personal attributes of the Sublime which are not separate from His Sublime person and which do not depend on anything else, yet there is a type of knowledge (as well as the hearing and the seeing) that is an attribute of action separate from the person. It is an attribute whose existence depends on the occurrence of a related issue other than His person, like creation, sustenance, giving life and death, all of which depend on the existence of a created, sustained, living and dead being. Everything, in their essence and reality, are owned and encompassed by God. So, if they are sounds, they are heard by Him and made to hear by Him; if they are lights and colors, they are seen by Him and made to be seen by Him, and everything, whatever it may be, is known by Him and made to be known by Him. This type of knowledge is among His attributes of action, which take place when the action is done by God, not before it. The fact that this attribute took place after it was not there, does not mean that any change appears in His divine person, because it does not go beyond the station of action, and does not enter the station of person. So, when the verse draws result of knowledge from ownership it intends establishment of practical knowledge. (So think over it.)

The verse: "And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and the day; and He is the Hearing, the Knowing", is like one of the premise of the proof which is explained in the preceding verse; because although the proof of the resurrection was completed by the words: "Say: 'To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?' Say: 'To God; He has ordained mercy on Himself...'," yet the initial simple glance at it might be oblivious of the fact that God's ownership of the things is concomitant to His knowledge of

it and to His hearing of what is heard of it like sounds and speech.

That is why God highlights it by repeating the ownership of the heavens and the earth, and links the hearing and knowledge to it. So, He said: "And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and the day"—it is synonymous with the words: "Say 'To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?' Say: 'To God'. " So this verse is like a premise which completes the proof given in the preceding verse.

This verse—even though we have not been able to do full justice to its explanation, and it can never be done—is among the finest Qur'anic verses in meaning, the most delicate in demonstration and argumentation, and the most eloquent in speech.

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ۗ
قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ ۖ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

(6:14) Say: "Shall I take a guardian besides Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds (others) and is not (Himself) fed." Say: "I am commanded to be the first who submits himself, and you should not be of the polytheists."

Now begins the argument for His Unity and that He has no partner.

By studying the history of idolatry and how the idols and false deities were adopted, one can gather that people submitted to it and bowed before the idols for one of the two reasons: Either they found themselves in need of a multitude of factors for preserving their lives, like partaking of food, clothes, dwellings, spouses, children, clan and so on; the most important being the food which according to simple view man needs it more than any other thing. Also, they thought that each kind of these needs is attached to a specific cause that arranges to magnanimously fulfil that particular need, like the cause which produces rain which helps the earth in growing pasture and greenery for their cattle and produces good grain for themselves; and there is the cause which manages the affairs of mountains and valleys; or the one which produces love and affection; or the factor which controls affairs of sea and the ships that traverse it. So, they realized that they don't possess sufficient power to gain control over that need or other necessities and they were forced to humble themselves to the cause relevant to their need and took it as a god and started worshiping it.

Or, alternatively, they found the defenceless man target of the arrows of accidents, surrounded by great and general evils and calamities which he cannot stop, like flood, earthquake, deluge, famine and epidemic; and besieged by other small tests and trials, like illness, pains, stumbling, wretchedness and barrenness; enemy, envier and opponent, etc. Then they fabricated for them dominating causes that inflict calamities upon men in order to break their back and pollute their good life. They believed that such factors were sublime creatures like gods of each species, the spirits of the stars, and celestial bodies. Thus, they took them as gods, fearing their wrath and anger, and worshiped them in order to keep them on their side with their worship and to please them by humbling themselves to them in order to free themselves from calamities and misfortunes, and to be safe from their evil and harms that would have descended on them.

The verse, that is: "Say: 'Shall I take a guardian besides God...'" and the following verses, argue against the polytheists by reversing their two proofs against themselves; that is, it accepts the basic argument and considers it as correct, but it clarifies that its inevitable conclusion is that they should worship the Glorified God alone, and it negates every supposed partner.

So, His Word, the Sublime: "Say: 'Shall I take a guardian besides God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds (others) and is not (Himself) fed;'" point to the proof from the first basis (of idolatry), and it is the way of hope, that He should be worshiped because He is the Benefactor, and thus His worship will be the gratitude for His blessings and also bring forth more blessings.

He, Glory be to Him ordered His Prophet to explain to them in the style of questioning that the Glorified God alone is the guardian of all blessings that man and others enjoy, since He is the Sustainer Who does not need anyone to sustain Him, He feeds and is not fed. Its proof is that it is He Who has originated the heavens and the earth, and brought them forth from the darkness of non-existence to the light of existence; and bestowed on them the bounty of reality and existence. Thereafter, He poured over them the bounties which no one can count except Him—all this to continue its existence; among them is the feeding of man and the others. All these bounties are prepared to preserve the existence of man and others, and the causes that lead these bounties to their due places, this entire end at His origination and invention of the things and the causes and their effects are all among His makings.

So to Him, the Glorified, returns sustenance whose most important manifestation for man is feeding; so it is incumbent on all to worship God alone, because He is the One who feeds us without any need of anybody feeding Him.

The above description makes it clear that:

First: The expression of worship and divinity by using the word: *walīy* (guardian) in the verse: "Shall I take a guardian beside God", is only because of the proof based on God's bounty of providing food.

Second: Its connection with the phrase: "the Originator of the heavens and the earth", aims at explaining the reason why provision of food is confined to the Almighty as was elaborated earlier. Perhaps that may be inferred from the allusion of the word: and (He) is not fed, since it eludes to the fact that all those who are taken for gods, like Jesus and others are in need of food, etc.

It is possible to infer from this phrase in the proof that it points to yet another way of establishing His Unity which is better than the two ways (mentioned above). It means, in short, that God is the Originator of the universe and everything eventually leads to His creation; hence it is incumbent to surrender and submit to Him.

Why is this way of argument better? Although the first two ways lead to the result of monotheism inasmuch as He deserves worship; yet there remains one thing: the two paths lead to the incumbency of His worship either on basis of need of the bounties or on basis of fear of the punishment. So, the actual purpose is either seeking of the blessing or protecting from the wrath—not the Almighty's own person. But this path leads to the incumbency of God's worship because He is God, the Sublime.

Third: Although there are a multitude of Divine blessings, yet from all those God has especially mentioned the provision of food because feeding is simply the most obvious need of living creatures including the man.

Then, the Sublime ordered, after the completion of the argument of His Prophet, to mention to them what would support this intellectual proof: That God has ordered him, through revelation, to proceed in believing in God on the path which is led by the intellect, and it is monotheism; and has clearly forbidden him to cross on to the path that leads to the polytheists. So, He said: *Say:* "*I am commanded to be the first who submits himself,*" and then He said: "*and you should not be of the polytheists;*" (6:14).

Now, two things remain here:

One: That His Word: *the first who submits himself,* if it means the first who submitted from amongst you, then the meaning is clear sincehe had submitted before his *ummah*; and if it means "the first" to submit without any condition, then this priority will be inrank, not in time.[1]

Two: Since the result of the proof was servitude, and that is a sort of submission and humility, it was better to use the word, *Islam*, in this place, instead of *īmān*, because Islam points to the purpose of worship, that is, submission.

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾

(6:15) Say: "Surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the chastisement of a grievous day."

This is the second of the two paths which the polytheists had adopted for believing in gods: worshiping the gods protects them from their wrath and from descending of their chastisement.

Thus, God has taken in this argument the most fearful aspect of what one must fear of the kinds of punishment, and that is the punishment of the Hour of resurrection which is the heaviest in the heavens and the earth. This is similar to what He had taken in the first argument regarding the greatest need of man and that is, by first glance of the bounties, the provision of food.

The phrase: "if I disobey my Lord", has been used instead of, "if I ascribed anyone with my Lord", it points to the phrase in the preceding verse: *and you should not be of the polytheists*, which forbids the Holy Prophet from polytheism. The verse thus says: It is rationally incumbent upon me to worship God alone so that I may be safe from what I fear of the punishment of the grievous day. It is not only based on the guidance given to me from my Lord's revelation; this is the conclusion to which reason has guided me.

In this way, this verse runs parallel to the preceding one, inasmuch as both establish rational proof first and then support it by the divine revelation. So, understand it. This is among the finest abbreviations of the noble Qur'an as it explained this comprehensive meaning merely by using the word 'disobey' in place of 'Ascribed anyone'.

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1 If we look at the Prophet's spiritual creation, then he was the first not only in the rank but in the time too. He himself has said: "The first thing that God created was my light." See 'Abdu al-Ḥaqq Dehlawi, *Madārij al-nubuwwah*, p.3; *al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, vol.1, p.159. (Trans.)

مَنْ يُصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾

(6:16) He from whom it is averted on that day, Allah indeed has shown mercy to him; and this is a manifest achievement:

The meaning is clear. The verse completes the proof given in the preceding verse. At the simple glance, that verse apparently shows that the Holy Prophet established the argument regarding incumbency of monotheism upon himself by saying that God has forbidden polytheism to him, so it is incumbent on him to believe in God's Unity in order to be safe from the next world's chastisement.

It will appear to a negligent unmindful person that the argument may be turned against the Holy Prophet by saying that the prohibition was confined to you, as you claim, so the fear and incumbency of monotheism also should be reserved for you. Therefore, the argument does not mean that the belief of monotheism and rejection of any partner was incumbent on anybody other than yourself, and it will be a proof against you, not against anyone else.

So, the Divine Word: "He from whom it is averted on that day, God indeed has shown mercy to him"; show that the Divine chastisement covers and encompasses all; there is no escape from it except through His mercy. Therefore, it is incumbent on every person to fear the chastisement of that day for himself as the Holy Prophet fears it for himself; so the proof is general and is established against all the people, and not confined to him only.

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾

(6:17) And if Allah touch you with affliction, there is none to take it off but He; and if He visit you with good, then He has power over all things:

The two proofs described in the preceding verses were taken as example of what man hopes for (and that was provision of food) and as example of what he fears (and that is the punishment of the Day of Resurrection). Therefore, the explanation was completed with two examples; and the two verses, however, did not mention other kinds of harms and benefits that God sends down to His servants. All these are from God, glorified is His name.

The verse clearly describes that there are harms other than the

punishment of the Day of Resurrection that God afflicts upon man, and it is necessary for him to approach God for its removal. Likewise there are blessings that God bestows upon man, and there is no one to avert His grace or a snag to prevent His bestowal as He has power over every thing; and the hope of blessings makes it incumbent upon man to take Him as God, deserving of worship.

It is possible to imagine that since God touches man with harm or good, therefore He deserves to be worshiped (and the opponent does not deny it[1]); yet it does not prove that divinity and being worshiped is reserved for the Almighty. Because what the idolaters have taken as gods are intermediary causes and powerful intercessors that can affect the world positively or negatively, and that makes it incumbent upon man to seek proximity to them out of fear of their evil or in hope of their good.

This argument is rejected on the basis that God, Glory be to Him is *Omnipotent over His servants* ("then He has power over all things"); none of them is above or equal to Him. They themselves as well as their actions and effects are under His domination. They do not do any good or bad action except by His (creative) permission and will. They are not at all independent in any affair, nor do they possess for themselves any harm, benefit or anything else. Whatever good or bad effect rises from the horizon of their persons ends at His command, will and permission, and is attributed to Him as it may be appropriate to attribute based on His glory and power.

The two verses together complete one meaning: that whatever good or bad touches the man is from God according to what can be appropriately attributed to His divine person; so the glorified God is alone in divinity, alone as deserving to be worshiped, there is no god other than Him, and none is to be worshiped except Him.

God has expressed the affliction of harm and good with the word, 'touching', as an indication of insignificance in His speech: "if He touches you" and "and if He visit (that is, touches) you." It shows that whatever harm or

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1 Although the elites among the idolaters allowed His worship but relying on the fact that He is of unlimited existence, they believed that devotional worship is irrelevant to Him. The general public among them, however, often worshiped Him in line with other gods, as is shown by the Meccan polytheists' *talbiyah* in pre-Islamic ḥajj: *Labbayk lā sharīka laka illa sharikan huwa laka, tamlikuhu wa mā malak*, that is, Here I come (O my Lord), there is no partner to You, except a partner whom You dominate and whatever he owns. (Auth.)

good afflicts man is an easy task from His unlimited power against which nothing can stand; a limited creature cannot master it or bear it.

Probably the words that speak about visiting with good, "then He has power over all things", serve to show what we had mentioned earlier that there is no one to avert His grace so that it proves that Almighty God has power over every supposed good, just as He has power over every supposed harm; and it manifests the reason of His Word: "there is none to take it off but He"; because if anyone else were to take off the affliction which God inflicts upon a person, then it would push aside God's power over it; and likewise, "He has power over all things" demands that nothing should be capable of averting the good that He bestows upon a person.

The verse specifically links the touching of harm or good to the Holy Prophet. It is similar to the confinement seen in the verse: *Say:* "*Surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the chastisement of a grievous day;*" while the verse: *And He is the Supreme, above His servant,* is of the general nature like that found in the words, *He from whom it is averted on that day, Allah indeed has shown mercy to him.*

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِۦ ۚ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

(6:18) And He is the Supreme, above His servants; and He is the Wise, the Aware:

al-Qahr is a sort of domination; it means that a thing overcomes another thing and compels it to follow an effect of the dominant thing (which goes against the effect of the dominated thing in nature or so on); for example, water overcomes fire and forces it to extinguishment, and fire overcomes water and turns it into steam or makes it dry. Since God has manifested the creative causes to serve as intermediaries in appearance of the events—so that they may exercise their impact on their effects; and these causes, whatever they may be, are compelled to obey what God wants in them and with them—its correct to say that these causes are dominated by God, and so God is the Supreme Dominator over them.

al-Qāhir is among the names which may be used for God as well as for others; yet there is a difference between His domination and that of others. Other things dominate one another while they coexist on an equal level of being and existence; for example, fire dominates wood by burning and inflaming it, both are physical beings with different demands of nature from

one another, but the fire is more powerful in imposing its effect on the wood and so it overcomes the wood by stamping its effect on it.

However, God, Glory be to Him is dominant not like the domination of fire over wood; rather His dominance is thoroughly overwhelming and comprehensive. In the sense that when we ascribe burning and inflaming a body, example, firewood, to God, then He, the Glorified, dominates it through the limited existence which He has bestowed upon it. He dominates it through the characteristics and conditions which He has given it and put in it with His power. He dominates it through the fire which He kindles to burn and inflame it; and He owns all that is found in the fire of its essence and effect. He dominates it by disconnecting the gift of resistance from the firewood, and putting the burning and inflaming in its place so that there is no resistance, no defiance, no rebellion or any such thing *vis-à-vis* His will and intention, because it comes from a sublime horizon.

So, He, the Sublime, is Omnipotent over His servants while He is above them, and not like domination of one thing over the other that are equals. The noble Qur'an has confirmed this discussion by giving its result when it mentioned *al-Qāhir* as one of His names in two places in this chapter: this verse and the verse 61.

Thus, it has qualified this name in both places by the phrase: *above His servants*. The word, *al-qahr*, is mostly used where the dominated being is a rational being, contrary to the term *al-ghalabah*; and that is why al-Rāghib has explained it as degradation/demeaning; and degradation in rational ones is more apparent; but this does not prevent its application to non-rational beings in usage or with special consideration.

The Glorified God, Who is Omnipotent over His servants, touches them with harm and good, and degrades them for His obedience; He is Supreme above His servants in whatever they do and whatever effect they leave behind, because He is the Owner of what He has given in their ownership, and has power on whatever power that He has given them over others.

Since in the two verses under discussion He has ascribed the touching with harm and good to Himself, and sometimes they are ascribed to other than Him, He distinguished His own stand from that of others by the following phrase at the end of the verse: *and He is the Wise, the Aware*. 'He is the Wise' who does not do whatever He does haphazardly and ignorantly; and 'He is the Aware' who makes no mistakes nor does He err like others.

Verses 19–20

This is an argument on monotheism based on the path of revelation. Although Unity of God and rejection of a partner from Him can be proved rationally in several ways, there is nothing to prevent its establishment from the way of clear revelation in which there is no doubt. The aim is to achieve certainty that God is One God; there is no partner with Him; and if this objective can be achieved through revelation that there is no doubt in it being a divine revelation, like the Qur'an which relies on challenges, and then there is nothing to prevent in relying on this method.

قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ ۖ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ
هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ ۚ أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً
أُخْرَىٰ ۚ قُلْ لَا أَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّنِي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

(6:19) Say: "What thing is the greatest in testimony?" Say: "Allah is witness between me and you; and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches. Do you really bear witness that there are other gods with Allah?" Say: "I do not bear witness." Say: "He is only one God, and surely I am clear of that which you set up (with Him),"

God orders His Prophet to ask them about the greatest thing in testimony.

Testimony means bearing the news with a kind of clarity like eye-witnessing, etc. and conveying such news by informing and announcing. This bearing and conveying of news—especially the bearing—greatly differs according to the perception of the bearers and according to the manifestation of the news borne by the bearer and according to the strength and weakness of the bearer in conveying the news.

So, a bearer of testimony afflicted by negligence, forgetfulness or absent-mindedness cannot be like the one who properly remembers what his ears hear and his eyes see; similarly, a vigilant person cannot be like a drunk, nor is a learned specialist in his field like an unaware layman.

With this difference in levels of the bearing and conveying of news, there is no doubt that the Glorified God is greatest of all in testimony because it is He who has created every small and great thing, and to Him returns every *amr*[1] and *khalq*[2]. He encompasses everything and is with everything, even (an entity as small as) an atom's weight in the heavens and the earth does not escape from His knowledge, nor anything smaller than that nor bigger; neither does He go astray nor does He forget.

Since this matter was clear and there was no doubt about it, there was no need to bring forth its reply in words by saying: "Say: 'God is the greatest in testimony,'" as God has said: *Say: "To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?" Say: "To Allah..."* (6:12); or by saying: "They will surely say: 'God', as He has said: *Say:" Whose is the earth, and whoever is therein, if you know?" They will say: "Allah's."* (23:84–85).

Moreover, the Divine Word: "Say: 'God is witness between me and you,'" lead to that reality and takes the place of a reply. It is not unlikely that the word 'witness' be a predicate to a deleted subject, i.e. the pronoun, 'He', pointing to God; and in that case, the whole sentence will be: "Say: 'God is witness between me and you;'" it will thus contain the reply of the question and the beginning of a new sentence.

Bear in mind that the sentence: "Say: 'God is witness between me and you,'" containing the Holy Prophet's statement about God's testimony, is in itself a testimony, as it begins with the word, 'Say' since God's order to him, to inform them of God's testimony for his prophethood, is not separate from this witnessing (of prophethood). Therefore, there is no need to hold to various types of witnessing that is found in the Noble Qur'an for his prophethood and for the coming of the Qur'an from Him as seen in: *...and Allah knows thatyou are most surely His messenger* (63:1). *But Allah bears witness by what He has revealed to you that He has revealed it with His knowledge...* (4:166); and there are other verses that prove the point explicitly or implicitly by using the term 'testimony' or other words.

Qualifying His testimony with the phrase: "between me and you," shows that God comes in the middle of the two opposite parties: the Holy Prophet and his people. The Holy Prophet was not separate from them and was not distinguished from them except in the claim of prophethood and

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1 *Amr:* To create without matter. (Trans.)

2 *Khalq:* To create with matter. (Trans.)

messengership, and the claim of revelation of the Qur'an; but descending of the Qur'an through revelation is mentioned in the next sentence: and this Qur'an has been revealed to me. So, God's testimony between the Holy Prophet and his people is actually His testimony for prophethood. This is also supported by His Word in the next verse: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons,* as will be explained, if God will.

and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may warnyou and whomsoever it reaches: It is connected to the previous order, *Say:* and is in conjunction with: *Allah is witness between me and you.*

Presenting the process of 'warning' as the aim of revealing the Noble Qur'an is based on the path of fear in the prophetic call and it is more effective in minds of the general public. On the other hand, the path of hope and promise of reward (which is one of the two paths in the prophetic call, and the mighty Book has used it to some extent) does not raise in one the compulsion to seek it, it merely creates longing and desire; contrary to the path of fear in which averting the possible harm is rationally incumbent.

Moreover, Islam calls to the religion of nature which is endowed and placed in people's nature, but they are concealed from it because of their involvement in polytheism and sins which bring upon them misfortune and Divine wrath. In such a situation, it was nearer to reason and prudence to begin their call with warning; and probably it's for all this that the character of the Holy Prophet has been confined (in this verse) to one of a warner, as we see in the Qur'anic words: *You are naught but a warner* (35:23). *...and I am only a plain warner* (29:50).

This concerns the common people, but as for the particular servants of God, who worship Him out of love for Him, not out of fear of the Fire or greed for a garden, since they perceive the call with fear and hope from a different angle. They perceive the Fire as a symbol of distance (from God) and His wrath, so they are afraid of it for that reason; and they perceive the garden as the arena of proximity and pleasure (of God), and therefore they aspire to it.

Apparently, the sentence: "and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches", seems that it is addressed to the polytheists of Mecca or to the Quraysh and to the Arabs in general. But the contrast between the second person pronoun 'you' and 'whomsoever it reaches'—and this phrase refers to him whom the Holy Prophet did

not call face to face during his lifetime or after it—shows that the call was addressed to all those whom the Holy Prophet called, no matter whether the call preceded the revelation of the verse, happened simultaneously with it or followed it.

So, His Word: *and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches,* show that the Holy Prophet was sent with the Qur'an generally to all those who heard it from him or (who will hear it) from someone else till the Day of Resurrection. You may also say: The verse shows that the Noble Qur'an is a proof from God and His Book which speaks with truth to the people of this world from the time of its revelation till the Day of Resurrection.

The verse uses the phrase: "with it I may warn you", and does not say, 'with its recital I may warn you; because the Qur'an is a proof against him who hears its words, knows its meaning and is guided to its purposes; or interpreted for him its words and made its content reach his ear. It is not necessary that a written message, to a community, to be in their language, but to raise its proof against them and make them comprehend the object of the message. The Holy Prophet had indeed invited the people of Egypt, Ethiopia, Byzantines and Iran by his letters while their languages were not of the Qur'an; and among those who believed in the Holy Prophet in his life-time and whose belief was accepted were Salmān of Persia, Bilāl of Ethiopia, Ṣuhayb of Byzantine and several Jews whose language was Hebrew—these are the facts in which there is no doubt.

"*Do you really bear witness that there are other gods with Allah?*" *Say:* "*I do not bear witness.*" *Say:* "*He is only one God, andsurely I am clear of that which you set up* (*with Him*)." When God mentioned His testimony (for the Holy Prophet), and it is the greatest testimony for his messengership, and he was not sent except for inviting them to the religion of monotheism. Once God has testified that He has no partner in His divinity, then no one has the right to bear witness that there are other gods besides Him. Now, He orders His Prophet to ask them a question like someone who is surprised and shocked: Do they bear witness for multiple gods? This emphasis is seen by the usage of *an* and *lām*; as if the soul does not accept that they would testify to it after hearing the testimony of God, the Sublime.

Then He ordered the Holy Prophet to oppose them in the testimony and to negate from himself the testimony given by them. So the verse says: "Say: 'I do not bear witness.'"—that is, as you have testified. Then it says:

"Say: 'He is only One God, and surely I am clear of that which you set up (with Him);'" and this is bearing witness for His oneness, and disassociating from partners that they set up besides Him.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمُ ۘ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(6:20) Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; (as for) those who have lost their souls, they will not believe.

It gives information of what God has testified in the Books which were sent to the People of the Book, and what their scholars knew from the Books of the prophets in their possession—the books that contained good news after good news of the Holy Prophet of Islam and his attributes in which there was no doubt at all.

Once the Holy Prophet's attributes were brought to their attention; they recognized him exactly as they knew their own sons. God says: *Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, the Ummī, whom they find, written down with them in the Torah and in the Gospel...* (7:157); *Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, and thosewho are with him are hard against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Gospel* (48:29). *Is it not a signto them that the learned men of the Israelites know it?* (26:197).

Since some of their scholars used to hide what was with them (in their books) about his good news and his attributes, they disdained to believe in him. So, God, the Sublime, clarified their loss in their affairs by saying: "(As for) those who have lost their souls, they will not believe."

Some discussion in the explanation of a similar verse in the Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:146) has passed earlier; and we have explained there the reason of change from second person pronoun to the third person, and, God willing, full explanation of that will be given in the Sūrah al-A'rāf (7:156).

Examining Narrations

(1) Ibn Bābawayh narrates through his chain from Muḥammad b. 'Īsā b. 'Ubayd who said: "Abu al-Ḥasan said to me: 'What would you say if it is said to you: "Inform me about God, to Whom belong

Might and Majesty, whether He is a thing or not a thing." '" He said: "I said: 'God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, has identified Himself as a thing, when He says: *Say: "What thing is the greatest in testimony?" Say: "Allah is witness between me and you."* And I say: 'Surely He is a thing not like (other) things; because rejection of His being a thing entails His rejection and nullity.' He said to me: 'You spoke the truth, and well done.'" (*Tafsīr al-burhān*)

(2) al-Riḍā, peace be upon him, said: "In *tawḥīd* people are of three faiths: Negation, anthropomorphism, and affirmation without anthropomorphism. As for the faith in negation, is not acceptable; and the faith in anthropomorphism is not acceptable because nothing resembles God, the Blessed, the Sublime; and the correct faith is the third one: affirmation without anthropomorphism. (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: The view of negation means repudiation of the meanings of the attributes from Him, as the Mu'tazilites believe; and it means to reduce the positive attributes to the negation of their opposite, for example, the meaning of 'the Powerful' is that He is 'not powerless,' the meaning of 'the Knowing' is that He is 'not ignorant.' This is not valid unless it can be traced to the third view as explained by the Imām. The view of anthropomorphism means comparing God to something else—and there is nothing like Him—that is, affirming for Him an attribute in its limited sense which is found within us and which is distinguished from other attributes. So, His power becomes like our power, His knowledge becomes like our knowledge, and so on. But if He had attributes like ours, then He would be in need like us, and consequently He would not be the Essential/Eternal Being—He is well above this.

The view of affirmation without anthropomorphism means that to affirm for God the basic meaning of an attribute, and to remove fromHim the characteristics of the attribute which are found in the created beings; in other words, to affirm the attribute and to reject its limitation.

(3) Abu al-Jārūd narrates from Abū Ja'far that he said about the Divine Word: *Say: "What thing is the greatest in testimony?" Say: "Allah is witness between me and you."*: That was (revealed) becausethe Meccan polytheists had said: 'O Muḥammad! Didn't God find any messenger to send other than you? We do not see anyone who would confirm what you say.' (This was in the beginning of his call to them when they were at Mecca.) They (also) said: 'And we

have indeed asked the Jews and the Christians about you, and they believe that there is no mention of you (in the books) with them; so bring to ussomeone who would bear witness that you are indeed the messengerof God.' The Messenger of God said: *'Allah is witness between me and you*.'" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

(4) Bakīr narrates from Muḥammad who narrates from Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, about the Word of God: *that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches*, that he said: " ʿAli, peace be upon him, is among those whom it has reached." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: Apparently, *whomsoever it reaches* is in conjunction with the second person pronoun, *you*. It has been narrated in some traditions that *whomsoever it reaches* means the Imām; and then *whomsoever reaches* is a conjunction of the omitted subject: *I may warn you*. But the first meaning is clearer.

(5) Ibn Bābawayh narrates from Yaḥyā b. ʿImrān al-Ḥalabī from his father from Abū ʿAbdillāh, peace be upon him, that he was asked about the Word of God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty: "... *and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches.*" He said: "In every language." (*Tafsīr al-burhān*)

Author's comment: We have seen how this may be inferred from this verse.

(6) Abu al-Shaykh has narrated from Ubayy b. Ka'b that he said: "Some captives were brought before the Messenger of God, so he said to them: 'Were you invited to Islam?' They said: 'No.' So, he set them free and then he recited: "...*and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches.*" Then he said: 'Set them free until they reach their place of safety because they were not invited (to Islam).'" (*Tafsīr al-manār*)

(7) Verily ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said to ʿAbdullāh b. Salām: "Do you recognize Muḥammad in your books?" He said: "Yes, by God! We recognize him with the attributes by which God has described him to us when we see him among you just as one of us recognizes his own son when he sees him with the other children."
As for what Ibn Salām swears by, is that: "Certainly, I have greater knowledge of this Muḥammad than my knowledge of my son." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

Verses 21–32

The verses turn to the original style, and that is addressing apresent audience; so it addresses the Holy Prophet and describes to him the injustices of polytheists in pure fundamental beliefs, and that is monotheism, belief in prophethood and resurrection. This is reflected in the Divine Word: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah ...; And of them is he who hearkens to you... And they say: "There is nothing but our life of this world ..."*

Then these verses describe that in this was the greatest injustice from them, and a way of putting themselves to perdition and loss. Also, it became clear how these acts of injustice reflect on them and they will be fully recompensed on the Day of Resurrection; so they shall forge a lie against their souls by denying what they had said in this world, and they will desire to return to this world in order to do good deeds, and they will show their regret for what they had neglected *vis-à-vis* God.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

> (6:21) And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or (he who) gives the lie to His communications; surely the unjust will not be successful.

Injustice is one of the most ignominious sins; rather meticulous analysis shows that all sins are horrible and condemnable to the extent of the injustice found in them—and it means deviation and diversion from the middle course, and that is justice.

The way injustice is considered great or small based on the characteristics of the perpetrator of injustice, similarly, its greatness or smallness depends on the victim on whom injustice was done or its intended target. Whenever his status becomes greater and his rank becomes higher, the injustice becomes greater and mightier. There is no one more honourable and more respectable than God, Glory be to Him, or His signs which lead to Him; therefore, there is no one more unjust than he who is unjust to this sacred arena or to what is related to it in any way. In reality, of course, he is not being unjust

but to his own soul.

God, Glory be Him, has indeed confirmed this rational theory by His Word: "And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against God or (he who) gives the lie to His communications."

As for forging a lie against God, the Sublime: that happens when one asserts a partner to Him, while He has no partner; or claims prophethood falsely, or ascribes an order to Him falsely and wrongly. As for the denial of His communications: that happens when one denies a true prophet in his call which is based on the divine signs, or rejects the true religion; and rejecting the creator is a part of it.

The verse applies to the polytheists, that is, the idol worshipers towhom this argument is addressed, inasmuch as they established for God, Glory be to Him, partners, claiming that they were intercessors,with whom began the affairs in the world, and on them revolves the management of the universe independently; on the other hand, they denied the divine signs which prove prophethood and resurrection.

Sometimes some (scholars) join to this mix the people who believe in the intercession of the Holy Prophet, the Purified Ones from his progeny, or Spiritual Masters from his *ummah*. They think that to seek their intercession in any need of this world or the next is polytheism which comes under this and other similar verses.

It seems that they are oblivious of the fact that God, the Sublime has confirmed intercession when it is joined with permission, in His Speech, without qualifying it with this world or the next. He has said—and Powerful is the Speaker: *Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?* (2:255).

Moreover, He has said: *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness ofthe truth and they know* (him), (43:86). So, He confirmed intercession as a right of the scholars who are witnesses of the truth; and prophets are certainly among them, including our Prophet. God, Glory be to Him, has confirmed him as a witness in His Word: *...and bring you as a witness against these?* (4:41); and He has clearly described his knowledge: *and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly every thing...* (16:89). *The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart* (26:193–4). Can it be imagined that the Book which clearly explains every thing will be sent to a heart which has no knowledge of it? Or, God has sent him as a witness and he is not a witness with truth? God, the Sublime, has further said: *...that you may be the bearers of witness*

to the people... (2:143) *... and take witnesses from among you...* (3:140). *And* (as for) *theseexamples, We set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned;* (29:43). So, He has confirmed that there are in this *ummah* witnesses who are knowledgeable, and He does not confirm except the truth.

God, the Sublime, also said about His (Prophet's) Household, peace be on them: *Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a* (*thorough*) *purifying* (33:33). So, He made it clear that they are purified by divine purification; then He said: *Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an , in a Book that is protected; none shall touch it save the purified ones* (56:77–79). He counts them the scholars of the Qur'an (which is a clarification for everything), and the purified ones are the certified group in this *ummah* for witnessing with truth to which no vain talks and falsity find its way. We have fully described the subject of intercession in the first volume of this book, so refer to it.[1]

... surely the unjust will not be successful: *al-Falāḥ* (success), *al-fawz* (success), *al-najāḥ* (success), *al-ẓafar* (victory), and *al-sa'ādah* (bliss, felicity) are all similar in meaning. That is why al-Rāghib has explained *al-falāḥ* as achievement of desire, which is nearly synonymous with *al-sa'ādah*.

He said in *al-Mufradāt*:

> "*al-falaḥ* means to cleave; it is said: 'Iron is cleft with iron,' and that is why *al-fallāḥ* is used in meaning of a farmer (who tills the land). *al-Falāḥ* is victory and achievement of desire and it is of two kinds—of this world and of the next:
>
> (i) The achievement of this world is attainment of the blessings with which the life of the world becomes good, and they are: abiding, affluence and honour; and that were what the poet meant when he said:
>
> Achieve what you want, as sometimes it is achieved
> with weakness while the wise man is at times deceived.
>
> (ii) And the success of the next world and that involves four things: abiding without perdition, affluence without need, honour without humiliation and knowledge without ignorance."

So, it can be said that *al-falāḥ* is felicity and happiness; it is described in this way because therein is victory and attainment of desire by cleaving the snags which obstruct the way to the goal.

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1 See *al-Mīzān* (Eng. transl.), vol.1. (Trans.)

And this is a comprehensive meaning which is applicable to cases where it is used; like the Divine Word: *Successful indeed are the believers* (23:1); *He will indeed be successful who purifies it* (91:9); *surely the unbelievers shall not be successful* (23:117). There are other such verses.

The words "surely the unjust will not be successful"—and injustice is taken here as an attribute—mean that the unjust ones will not get their desire that they wished to attain by clinging to whatever they hold on to because injustice does not lead the unjust to the victory and happiness which he wants to attain through his injustice.

This is so because happiness cannot be happiness unless it is desired and wanted in reality and in external existence. Thus, the thing that desires this goal and happiness in its existence will be equipped with causes and instruments which agree with this required happiness. For instance, there is a man, his required happiness demands that he should abide by replacing in his body what is dissolved in his body. Then he is equipped with the intricate nourishment system which agrees with it, including the related limbs and causes; then there is in external materials that which agrees with his body's composition, and he takes it through the causes and instruments provided for; then he refines it and changes its shape to what resembles the dissolved parts of his body, then attaches it to his body, and thus the body becomes complete after its incompleteness. This is a general order which covers all external species which we perceive through our perceptions and which we explore, without any difference and without fail.

On this runs the system of the universe in its progress. For every intended destination and desired happiness there is a special path; no one proceeds to it except by that path. If attempt is made to reach it through a path other than the one with which the system agrees, it would cause suspension of the cause and negation of the path. This suspension and negation cause decomposition of all the causes and relationships that are related to it. For instance, let us say, there is a man who has found a way to continue his existence through a way other than taking food, swallowing and digesting. This will lead to the suspension of his nutritional power, and in its turn would create deviation in all his powers of growth and reproduction.

The divine providence demands in these species which live with perception and will that they should live by conforming their actions to the knowledge they have acquired in external world. So, if it deviates from external world it would face what would negate its action; and if this was done

repeatedly, the personality would perish, like a man who wants to take food, and mistakenly takes poison as food, or clay as bread and so on.

Man has general beliefs and opinions born of the external universal system, which he treats as the basis and makes his action, conform with them, like the beliefs related to the genesis and resurrection as well as the practical laws which he treats as the standards for his actions like worship and trade deals.

These are the natural paths to the human felicities; there is no path to them other than these. If man proceeded on it he would get his desire and achieve his felicity; but if he deviated to some other path—and that is injustice—it would not lead him to his desire, and even if it led to it, it would not be lasting; because all paths and ways are related to it. So, they would fight against it, and oppose it with their full power and ability. Also, the parts of the external world, which are the cause of the genesis of these opinions and orders, would not conform to it in practice; and would continue on this condition until the affair is changed, his felicity is destroyed and his life becomes loathsome.

Often an unjust man in his greed uses his power with sin to acquire his desire and felicity through unlawful means. Thus, he opposes correct belief relating to the monotheism; or disputes legal rights of the others and transgresses the limit to unjustly usurp the people's property; or to disgrace their honour by violently tearing their curtains; or to meddle with their lives without any right; or to disregard the sanctities of divine worship like prayer, fast, *ḥajj*, etc.; or to commit sins related to them, like falsehood, wrong accusation, cheating and so on.

He commits the above-mentioned sins, and sometimes gets whathe intended to, i.e. happiness with achieving his goal as he had wanted, but he is oblivious of his great loss in this world and the next.

As for the worldly loss, the path he has trodden on is the path of turmoil, confusion and chaotic system; had it been the right path it would have been used in general, and if it had been used in general, then the system would have been destroyed; and with destruction of the system, the life of human society would have been nullified. Any system, which guarantees the continuity of the human species, whatever it may be, would dispute with him about what he has acquired through his illegal activities; and it would continue in this dispute untilit nullifies for him the demand of his action and result of his disgracedendeavours, be it immediate or deferred; and certainly his

injusticewill not continue.

And as for the next world, it is because his injustice is written in the book of his deeds, and it is engraved in the tablet of his soul through the marks he brings over it; then he is requited for it and lives in its style; *and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it* (2:284).

God says: *Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other? What then is the reward of such among you asdo this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do* (2:85). *Those before them rejected* (prophets), *therefore there came to them thechastisement from whence they perceived not. So Allah made them taste the disgrace in this world's life, and certainly the punishment of the hereafter is greater; did they but know!* (39:25–26). *And among menthere is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge and without guidance and without an illuminating book, turning away haughtily that he may lead* (others) *astray from the way of Allah; for him is disgrace in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection We will make him taste the punishment of burning. This is due to what your two hands have sent before, and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants* (22:8–10). There are numerous verses in this meaning.

The verses—as you see—cover the injustices affecting the society and the individual; so they confirm the topic described above; and the most comprehensive of all is the verse under discussion, "surely the unjust will not be successful."

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَيْنَ شُرَكَاؤُكُمُ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(6:22–23) And on the day when We shallgather them all together, then shall We say to those who associated others (with Allah): "Where are your associates whom you asserted?." Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say: "By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists,"

The adverb, "the day", is related to a deleted verb, and its full formis: And remember the day... The word: "all together", asserts that the divine

knowledge and power do not miss any one among them; so God encompasses all of them with knowledge and power, He certainlywill enumerate and gather them all together, and will not leave anyone out.

This sentence aims at explaining the preceding phrase: *surely the unjust will not be successful.* It is as though when it was said, *surely the unjust will not be successful;* it was asked: How would it be? The reply was given: Because God will soon gather them together and will ask them about their associates, then they will be lost to them and will not find them; so they will deny their polytheism and will swear falsely by God. If these unjust people would have been successful in ascribing partners to God, their associates would not have been lost and they would not have told lies against themselves. They wouldhave rather found them with the claimed partnership and intercession, and enjoyed their intercession.

The words, "Then their excuse": It is said that the word, *al-fitnah* (translated here as excuse) means reply, that is, their reply was only that they swore falsely by God that they were not polytheists.

Another explanation: It means the end result of their involvement with idols would be nothing but that they would say... Also, it is said that the word, *al-fitnah*, means excuse. And each interpretation has a justification.

انْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(6:24) See how they lie against their own souls, and that which they forged has passed away from them.

It points to the important feature of their story on the Day of Resurrection. It means that they will soon reject themselves and will not find what they had forged (in this world); if they were successful in their injustice and succeeded in their desire, their end would not lead to its loss and to this lying against their own selves.

As for them rejecting themselves: It is because when they would swear by God that they were not polytheists, they would deny what they had claimed in this world that God had partners; they were insisting on it and had turned away from every clear proof and manifest sign, all because of their injustice and arrogance. So, this would be their lie against their own selves.

And as for the passing away of that which they had forged, it is because that will be the day when it will be manifestly clear that the rule, the kingdom and the power all belong to God, and nothing belongs to any one else

except the vileness of servitude, and theinherent readiness without any independence. God says: *and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement* (2:165). *To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer* (of all), (40:16). *The day on which no soul shall control anything for* (another) *soul; and the command on that day shall be entirely Allah's* (82:19).

At this time they will see with their eyes that the divinity isreserved for God Who is alone and has no partner; and their idolsand associates will be exposed before them, that they own neither any harm nor any benefit for themselves or for others. Then they will realize that all the attributes of divinity and intercession etc, whichthey had ascribed to them, belong to God only. They had fallen in confusion and had imagined it for others, and what they had forged had passed away from them.

Now, if they would ask them for help, they would be replied in a way that would cut every hope off. God says: *And when those who associate* (*others with Allah*) *shall see their associate-gods, they shall say: "Our Lord! These are our associate-gods on whom we called besides Thee." But they will give them back the reply: "Most surely you are liars." And they shall tender submission to Allah on that day; and what they used to forge shall deport from them* (16:86–87). *This is Allah, your Lord, His is the Kingdom; and those whom you call upon besides Him do not control a straw. If you call on them they shall not hear your call, and even if they could hear they shall not answer you; and on the Resurrection Day they will deny your associating them* (*with Allah*), (35:13–14). *And on the day when We will gather them all together, then We will say to those who associated others* (*with Allah*): *"Keep where you are, you and your associates." Then We shall separate them widely one from another and their associates will say: "It was not us that you worshipped. Therefore Allah is sufficient as a witness between us and you that we were quite unaware of your worshipping* (*us*)." *There shall every soul become acquainted with what it sent before, and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Patron, and what they devised shall escape from them* (10:28–30).

It appears from meditation on these verses that the departure of what they had forged means exposure of the reality of their associates who do not have the attributes of association and intercession; and their realization that what had appeared to them of these things in the world was nothing but an optical allusion, a mirage. God says: *And* (as for) *those who disbelieve,*

their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays backto him his reckoning in full (24:39).

Question: The verses dealing with the description of the Day of Resurrection—as given above—show that on that day the realities willappear and come out of the hiding and confusion which are inseparable attributes of this worldly life; as God says: *The day when they shall come forth; nothing concerning them remains hidden to Allah* (40:16). So, what benefit can they get from their lie? And how will they tell lie when they see with their eyes opposite of what they spoke of lie? God says: *On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil* (3:30).

Answer: The information that they will tell lie and swear falsely on the Resurrection of Day, has come in the Divine Speech time and again. See for example the verse: *On the day that Allah will raise them up all, then they will swear to Him as they swear to you...* (58:18). That lie of theirs and their swearing on it will not be with the aim of achieving wrong purposes or to hide the truth, as it is done with lie in this world; and the next world is the place of recompense, not that of action and earning. However, as they had become habituated to come out of dangerous and perilous situations, and to gain benefits with false swearing and forged information, all this for deceiving and diverting (from the truth), the trait of lie has become deeply-rooted into their souls (or into their psyche). And when the trait is deeply rooted in the soul, the soul is compelled to response to its calls. For instance, look at a ribald obscene person, when the trait of abuse settles in his soul, he is unable to refrain from it, even if he so decides. Likewise, an arrogant person cannot bring himself to show humility to others—even if on a dangerous occasion he shows humility it is only in appearance, but in his heart he is as he was, he will not change, will not show remorse.

This is the secret of their speaking lie on the Resurrection Day, because it is the day when hidden things will be made manifest; and the heart bonded with lie, there is nothing in it except lie; so it will become then manifest, as God has said: ...*and they shall not hide anyword from Allah* (4:42).

Similar to it is the dispute found among the people of the world, and it will appear exactly among them on the Resurrection Day, and God has mentioned it in several places in His Speech; and more beautiful is the expression: *That most surely is the truth: the contending one with another of the inmates of the Fire* (38:64). This is about the inhabitants of the Fire. As

for the inhabitants of Paradise and forgiveness, there will appear what was in their souls here of the purity and safety. God says: *They shall not hear therein vain or sinful discourse, except the word peace, peace* (56:25–26). Understand it.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۚ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(6:25) And of them is he who hearkens to you, and We have cast veils over their hearts lest they understand it and a heaviness into their ears; and even if they see every sign they will not believe in it; so much so that when they come to you they only dispute with you; those who disbelieve say: "This is naught but the stories of the ancients,"

al-Akinnah (pl. *kinn*) means the cover in which a thing is hidden; *al-waqr* means heaviness in ear; *al-asāṭīr* (pl. *usṭūrah*) means lie and falsehood as is narrated from *al-Mubarrad*; its basis is *al-saṭr* which means a line of writing, a line of trees or men, and it is mostly used for false stories that has been collected, organized and arranged (in a systemic style).

The apparent context demands that the statement (of disbelievers) should have been: "They say: 'This is naught but the stories of the ancients;'" however, the verse says, *those who disbelieve say: ...* Probably this style was used to point to the reason of this statement, i.e. disbelief.

وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْأَوْنَ عَنْهُ ۖ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

(6:26) And they prohibit (others) from it and go far away from it, and they only bring destruction upon their own souls while they do not perceive.

"Prohibit others" that is from following it; *al-na'y* (to be far away). The restriction in, "and they only bring destruction upon their own souls", is that of reversal in the sense that they thought by prohibiting others from it and going far away from it, they would destroy the Holy Prophet and frustrate his divine mission, but God willed to complete His light; so they shall be

destroyed in a way that they do not perceive.

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وُقِفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَا لَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَا لَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

(6:27–28) And could you see when they are made to stand before the Fire, then they shall say: "Would that we were sent back, and we would not reject the communications of our Lord and we would be of the believers.." Nay, what they concealed before shall become manifest to them; and if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden, and most surely they are liars.

This describes what will be the result of their denial and of their insistence on disbelief and discarding the divine communications.

The words: "Would that we were sent back, and we would not reject the communications of our Lord ..."—with the final consonants of *nukadhdhiba* (we would not reject) and *nakūna* (we would be) pronounced with *a*—show their desire to return to the world and to be enrolled in the list of the believers, so that they may be rescued from the punishment of Fire on the Day of Resurrection. This speech of theirs is similar to their denying polytheism and their falsely swearing by God for it; it would be manifestation of their psychic traits on the Day of Resurrection. It is because they were habituated to express their desire of those things which they had no way to attain it, from the good and benefits which they had missed, especially when that missing was caused by their wrong option and their defective actions. Also, it is similar to what will soon come regarding their regret about their negligence of the Hour.

Expression of desire is correct in impossible matters as it is allowed in difficult possible things. For instance, the desire that the past could come back, etc. The poet says:

Would that, and if 'would that' was of any benefit,
would that youth were sold, I would have bought it.

As for the words: "Nay, what they concealed before shall become manifest to them", apparently the point of reference of all the pronouns—they, concealed, them—is the same, i.e. the polytheists who were discussed earlier;

'before' refers to this world. So, the meaning would be: When these polytheists will be made to stand before the fire, what they were concealing in this world shall become manifest to them; and its manifestation will make them to desire to be sent back to the world, to believe in God's communications and to enter into the fold of the believers.

(So, what did appear to them?) Nothing except the Fire before which they stood on the Day of Resurrection; they had hidden it inthis world by disbelieving, hiding the truth and concealing it after its manifestation, as the following Divine Word point to it: *Certainly you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp* (50:22).

As for the truth itself which they rejected in the world in spite of its manifestation to them, it was manifest to them from before; and thecontext rejects the idea that merely the manifestation of the truth to them (regardless of the appearance of the fire and the terror of the Dayof Resurrection) would cause them to express this desire.

And some similar verses about this situation point towards it. For instance: *And when it is said: "Surely the promise of Allah is true and as for the Hour, there is no doubt about it," you said: "We do not know what the Hour is; we do not think* (that it will come to pass) *save a passing thought, and we are not at all sure." And the evil* (consequences) *of what they did shall become manifest to them and that which they mocked shall encompass them* (45:32–33). *And had those who are unjust all that is in the earth and the like of it with it, they would certainly offer it as ransom* (to be saved) *from the evil of the punishment on the Day of Resurrection; and what they never thought of shall become plain to them from Allah. And the evil* (consequences) *of what they wrought shall become plain to them, and the very thing they mocked at shall beset them* (39:47–48).

The exegetes have explained the verse: "Nay, what they concealed before..." in various ways; and the author of *al-Manār* has described nine such explanations. He says:

"There are many views about it:

"First: It is their evil deeds and ugly abominations which appeared to them in their scrolls of deeds, and their limbs and organs testified for it.

"Second: It is their deeds which they used to forge and thought that they contain their felicity; however, God will make them null and void.

"Third: It is their disbelief and their rejection which they had hidden in the next world before they were made to stand by the fire; as God has quoted

them as saying: *Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say: "By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists."*

"Fourth: It is the truth or the belief which they were hiding and concealing by showing the disbelief and denial in enmity of the Messenger and because of arrogance. This is applicable to the most extreme of those who disbelieved from amongst the arrogant enemies about some of whom God has said: *And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their souls had been convinced of them* (27:14).

"Fifth: It is the truth which the leaders were hiding from their followers—the truth brought by the Messengers finally was manifestto the followers who imitated them; and of this was what some people of the Book concealed of our Holy Prophet's messengership, and his attributes and his good news given by their prophets.

"Sixth: It is what the hypocrites were hiding in this world—they concealed disbelief and showed faith and Islam.

"Seventh: It means the resurrection and the recompense, and included in it is the punishment of the fire; and their concealing it means rejecting it; and this is the basic meaning of the root, *k, f, r*.

"Eighth: The speech contains an omitted construct state, i.e. appeared to them the evil consequence of what they used to hide of disbelief and sins, and descended to them its punishment. So, they showed their discomfort and vexation, and wished to get free from it by returning to the world in order that they would leave what lack of faith and denial of divine communications have led them to; just as a man whom an incurable disease has put in agony wishes for death so that it would free him from agony, not that it is desirable in itself."

"We do not prefer any of these opinions; rather the opinion prefer-able in our views is the last one and that is: Ninth. On that day, all those disbelievers and their ilk will find manifest what they used to hide in the world—that which was repugnant in his eyes or in the eyesof those from whom he was hiding it."[1]

Then (the author of *al-Manār*) has expanded the talk in details to include the leaders of disbelievers and their followers as well as the hypocrites and profligates, from among those who indulge in abomination and hide it from the people, or neglect the obligatory duties and put forward

1 See *al-Manār*, vol.7, p.353. (Ed.)

false excuses and hide the reality.

By looking at the precepts we have put forward and meditating on them, you will clearly see the defects of all these opinions, so we shallnot discuss them needlessly.

The Divine Word: "and if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden", is a reminder that they would do what was settled in their souls of the contemptible traits in this life. What would incite them to desire to return to this world, and to believe in the communications of God and to enter into the fold of the believers? It would be the appearance of the truth which they had neglected including all that it entails of the chastisement on the Day of Resurrection; and it is what is demanded by the next world which entails the clear appearance of the unseen reality. And if they were to return to this world, they would be governed by the rules of this life, and the curtains of unseen would be let down on them. They would return to their free will, accompanied by the desire of the soul, whispering of the Satan, natural disposition of the humans, and the arrogance and the oppression; thus they would return to their original polytheism and enmity of truth. It will be so because what had urged them to the opposition of truth and the denial of the divine communications when they were in the world, is now as it was then, if we suppose that they are returned to this world after being raised up; so the same rule will apply without any difference.

And His Word: "and most surely they are liars," that is, in their wish that: "*Would that we were sent back, and we would not reject the communications of our Lord and we would be of the believers.*" Although expression of a wish is not an information which could be classified as true or false, but when they said, "would that we were sent back and we would not reject...", it was as though they said, 'God return us to the world and if He returned us we would not reject' mark that they did not say, we return and we will not reject—their talk contained a request and a promise: request to be returned and promise of belief and good deeds, as He has clearly mentioned it in His Word: *And could you but see when the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord: "Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard, therefore send us back, we will do good; surely* (now) *we are certain* (32:12)." *and they shall cry therein for succor: "O our Lord! Take us out; we will do good deeds other than those which we used to do* (35:37)."

In short, their word: "Would that we were sent back, and we

would not reject...," is tantamount to saying: 'O our Lord! Return usto the world, we will not reject Your communications, and we will be of the believers.' From this angle, it is subject to truth and falsehood, and so it is okay to count them as liars.

Also, probably they have been called liars in relation to their wish, that is, their hope and wish proved false, as it did not take place in reality, as they say; your hope proved false, for a man who wishes what is not attained.

Some people have said that it means their falsity in all that they speak about themselves that they would find the reality and believe in truth—but it is as you see (not worthy of consideration).

وَقَالُوا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وُقِفُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا ۚ قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(6:29–30) And they say: "There is nothing but our life of this world, and we shall not be raised,." And could you see when they are made to stand before their Lord. He will say: "Is not this the truth?" They will say: "Yea, by our Lord!" He will say: "Taste then the chastisement because you disbelieved."

These verses describe their open denial of resurrection and what it entails of offering the testimony on Day of Resurrection and their acknowledgement of what they were rejecting. The idolaters used to deny resurrection, as God has quoted them several times in His speech; and their belief in intercession of the partners was related to the worldly affairs only—that they brought benefits to them and averted harmful and perilous things from them.

So, His Word: "And they say: 'There is nothing but our life of this world...'," quote their denial, that there is no life except our life of thisworld, there is no life after that, and we will not be raised after death. And the words: "And could you see when they are made to stand before their Lord," is like its reply. It explains to the Holy Prophet, the result of their words: "There is nothing but our life of this world, and we shall not be raised," in the style of wish (as is clear from: "And could you see..."). They will certainly verify what they were denying, and acknowledge what they were rejecting by saying: "and we shall not be raised." This is to happen when they shall be made to stand before their Lord, and they shall clearly see the meeting, about which they

were told in the world, that is, they were to be raised after death. So, they acknowledge it after they had denied it in the world.

It appears from above that God has explained the 'raising up' in the verse: "and could you see when they are made to stand before their Lord," with 'meeting of God'; and it is supported by the expression in the next verse: *They are losers indeed who reject the meeting of Allah,until when the Hour comes upon them all of a sudden...*, where He has changed the gathering, raising up and resurrection mentioned earlier with meeting and then mentioned the Hour, that is, the Hour of meeting.

Also, His Word: "Is not this the truth?" that is, 'Is not the raising up, (which you rejected in the world, and it is meeting of God) the truth?'"'They will say: 'Yea, by our Lord!' He will say: 'Taste then the chastisement because you disbelieved'," and hid it.

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يَا حَسْرَتَنَا عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَىٰ ظُهُورِهِمْ ۚ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

(6:31) They are losers indeed who reject the meeting of Allah; until when the Hour comes upon them all of a sudden they shall say: "Alas for us, that we neglected it!" And they shall bear their burdens on their backs; now surely evil is that which they bear.

The author of *al-Majma'* says: "Everything which comes suddenly is *baghtah*; it is said: The affair came suddenly, comes suddenly, coming suddenly." al-Rāghib said in *al-Mufradāt*:

> "*al-Ḥasr* means removing the cloth from what it covers; it is said: 'I removed (cloth) from arm,'; *al-ḥāsir* means the one who does not wear coat of mail, nor helmet; *al-miḥsarah* (means a broom; ... *al-ḥāsir* means fatigued (because his powers are exposed) ...*al-ḥasrah* (means grief on what is lost, remorse on it; it is as though the ignorance was removed from him which had led him to commit that mistake; or weakened his powers by excessive grief; or he was too fatigued to make up his deficiency."

And he (al-Rāghib) said:

> "*al-Wazar* means place of refuge in a mountain; God says: *By no means! There shall be no place of refuge! With your Lord alone shall*

> *on that day be the place of rest* (75:11–12). And *al-wizr* means heavy load, likening it to the load of mountain; and it is used to denote sin just as it is also described as *al-thiql* means heavy load; God has said: *That they may bear their burdens entirely...* (16:25); and also He has said: *And most certainly they shall carry their own burdens, and other burdens with their own burdens* (29:13)."

The verse shows another consequence of their denial of being raised up, and it is that the Hour will take them all of a sudden. So, they shall cry out with grief on their negligence of it, and their loads will appear before them and sins which they will carry on their backs; and it will be the most difficult and most perilous condition of man. Well, how evil is what they shall be bearing and carrying—a heavy load or a sin, or the consequences of the sin.

The verse: "They are losers indeed who reject the meeting of God" is as the result emanating from the Divine Word: *And they say: "There is nothing but our life of the world, and we shall not be raised." And could you see when they are made to stand before their Lord. He will say: "Is not this the truth?" They will say: "Yea, by our Lord!" He will say: "Taste then the chastisement because you disbelieved."* It is because they exchanged comfort of the next world and happiness of the meeting of God with denial of resurrection and the resulting painful chastisement, and clearly it was a losing deal.

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ ۖ وَلَلدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

> (6:32) And this world's life is naught but a play and an idle sport; and certainly the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are pious; do you not then understand?

This is the conclusion of the discussion. God describes in it the condition of the two lives of this world and the next, and compares between them. This world's life is a play and idle sport and nothing else, because it revolves around a chain of reflective beliefs and imaginative aims, as a play revolves around them—so it is a play. Hence it deflects man's attention from the important life of the next world which is the real and enduring life—so it is an idle sport. Since the next world's life is real and enduring, it is good, and none shall get it except the pious ones—so it is better for them.

Examining Narrations

(1) Hishām b. Sālim narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq)that he said: "Surely God will go on forgiving on the Day of Resurrection to such an extent which will not come into any one's mind, until the polytheists will say: 'By God, our Lord! We were not polytheists.'" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

(2) (The author of) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* writes about the verse: *Then their 'fitnah' would be nothing...*, that it means: their 'excuse'. He writes that this has been narrated from Abū ʿAbdillāh.

(On Faith (*īmān*) of Abū Ṭālib)

(3) al-Qummī writes about the Divine Word: And they prohibit (others) from it and go far away from it, that 'they prohibit' refers to the Hāshimites who helped the Messenger of God and prevented the Quraysh (from harming him), and who went far away from him and did not believe in him. (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: This tradition is near to what has been narrated from ʿAṭāʾ and Muqātil that it refers to Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet as he used to hold back the Quraysh from the Holy Prophet, and to keep himself away from the Holy Prophet while he did not believe in him.

But the context does not agree with it since apparently the pronoun (*from it*) in the verse refers to the Qur'an, not to the Holy Prophet. Moreover, the traditions quoted through the Ahl al-Bayt about Abū Ṭālib's faith (*īmān*) are too numerous.

(4) It is quoted in *al-Majmaʾ*: "The consensus (*ijmāʾ*) of Ahl al-Bayt for *īmān* (faith) of Abū Ṭālib is a fact, and their consensus is sufficient proof (*ḥujjah*) because they are one of the two weighty things the Holy Prophet ordered to hold fast to them in hiswords: 'So long as you shall hold fast to them you will never go astray.'"(al-Ṭabrisī)

(5) This is also proven from what (ʿAbdullāh) Ibn ʿUmar has narrated that Abū Bakr brought his father, on the day of the conquest (of Mecca), to the Messenger of God, so he (the Holy Prophet) said: "Why didn't you leave the old man so that I should have come to him?"—and he was blind. Abū Bakr said: "I wished that God, the Sublime, should give him reward. I swear by Him who has sent you with truth that certainly I was happier with Abū Ṭālib's Islam than with my father's Islam, as I sought with it delight of your eyes

(that is, your pleasure)." The Holy Prophet said: "You are right."

(6) Also, al-Ṭabarī narrates through his chain that when the chiefs of the Quraysh saw how Abū Ṭālib defended the Holy Prophet, they came to him in a group and said: "We have brought to you the hero of Quraysh in beauty, magnanimity and gallantry, ʿAmmārah b. al-Walīd; we will give him to you and you give us your nephew who has divided our community and made a fool of our understanding so that we may kill him." Abū Ṭālib said: "You have not been just to me. You are giving me your son so that I should feed him, and I give you my son so that you should kill him; rather every one of you should bring his son so that I should kill him." And he said:

"*We defended the Messenger, the Messenger of the King* (God),*with bright* (swords) *which radiate like lightening.*

I defend and protect the Messenger of the King, protection of a guardian who is affectionate to him."

And his sayings and poems declaring his Islam are numerous and well-known beyond enumeration. Among that is his saying:

Didn't you know that we have found Muḥammad, a prophet like Moses, it is written in earlier books? Is not our father Hāshim who was courageous, and enjoined his sons to fight and wage war?

And his saying in a *qaṣīdah*:

And they said to Aḥmad, you are a man, of contrary language (and) *weak cause.*

Well, certainly Aḥmad has brought to them,truth, and has not brought to them a lie.

And his statement regarding the matter of the 'document'[1]and it

1 As the final strategy, the Quraysh put imposed a socio-economic boycott against the clans of Hāshim and Muṭṭalib. The document of boycott was written and hung in the Ka'bah. Abū Ṭālib took the two clans to the mountain trail known as Shi'b Abū Ṭālib and spent three years. This happened in the 7th year of the Prophetic mission. Only twice a year, in months of Rajab and Dhu al-ḥijjah (when violence was a taboo), did they dare to come out from the Shi'b. Then one day, the Prophet of Islam said to Abū Ṭālib, "I have been informed by God that the agreement of the Quryash has been eaten up by insects, and no writing has been left except the name of God." Abū Ṭālib believed in his nephew and came to the Quraysh and challenged them to check the document. When they looked into it, they found the words of the Holy Prophet to be true. This is how the socio-economic boycott came to its end. (Ed.)

is among the miracles of the Holy Prophet:
Certainly there was a lesson in the affair of the document, when a man who was not there will be told he will be astonished. God erased from it their disbelief and refractoriness and what enmity they had shown against the speaking truth.And the son of ʿAbdullāh became confirmed among us, *at the wrath of our people, he is blameless*.
And his saying in a *qaṣīdah* to his brother, Ḥamzah, exhorting him to follow the Holy Prophet and to be patient in his obedience:
Be steadfast, O Abū Ya'lā, in the faith of Aḥmad; show forth your faith; may you be strengthened in your resolve!It made me glad when you said that you are a man of faith! *Be then a true supporter of the Messenger of Allah in Allah's cause*.
And his saying in a *qaṣīdah*:
I shall be steadfast in the help of the Prophet, Muḥammad,I shall fight in his defence with spear and the troops.
Also, his saying urging Negus to support the Prophet:
Know, O King of Abyssinia, that Muḥammad is a prophet like Moses and Messiah son of Maryam. He brought guidance similar to what they brought, *and all* (of them) *by order of Allah guide and protect.Concerning him, you recite it in your own scriptures, a true account it is, not a fantastic tale.*
So do not set up equals with God and accept Islam, for the way of truth is not obscured in darkness.
"And his saying in his will, when death had reached him:
I enjoin to help the Prophet whose presence is good. My son ʿAli, and elder of the group ʿAbbās; and Ḥamzah the lion who defends his reality; and Jaʿfar, that they should repulse the people from him. May my mother, and what she gave birth to, be made your ransom in helping Aḥmad as shields against the people.

Author's comment: And similar to these poems are what is found in his well-known *qaṣīdah*s, and enjoinments and lectures quoting which will make the book too lengthy.

And the main proofs of those who say that Abū Ṭālib had not accepted Islam are some traditions narrated through the Sunnī chains. On the opposite side are the consensus (*ijmā'*) of Ahl al-Bayt and some traditions narrated through the Sunnī chains and his poems narrated from him. And every person may choose what he likes.

(7) Khālid has narrated from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: *and if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden,* surely they are cursed in origin. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(8) ʿUthmān b. ʿĪsā narrates from some of his companions from the (same) Imām that he said: "Surely God said to water: 'Be sweet and delicious, I shall create from you My garden and people of My obedience;' and He said to (another) water: 'Be salty and bitter, I shall create from you My fire and people of My disobedience.' Then He made both waters flow on the earth, then He took a handful in His hand and it was the right hand, then He created them a creation like tiny particles, then He made them witnesses on their own selves: 'Am I not your Lord, and is not My obedience incumbent upon you?' They said: 'Certainly.' Then He said to the fire: 'Be fire', and lo! It became flaming fire; and He said to them: 'Fall down in it'; so some rushed to it, some delayed in rushing to it and some did not leave their place, but then when they felt its heat, they returned, and none of them entered it. Then He (again) took a handful (the earth) in His hand, and created them a creation like tiny particles like those, then made them witnesses on their own selves as He had done with those others; then He said to them: Fall down into this fire; some of them delayed, some others ran fast and some passed on like twinkling of an eye; so they all fell in it. Then He said: Come out of it safe, so they came out and nothing had afflicted them.

"Then the others said: 'O our Lord! Forgive us; we shall do as they have done.' He said: 'I forgive you.' So some of them ran fast and others did not leave their places, as they had done the first time. So this is the Word of God: *and if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden, and most surely they are liars.*" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comment: This and the preceding narration are among the traditions of the tiny particles.[1] Its full discussion will come in Sūrah al-A'rāf (The Elevated Places), under the verse: *And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: "Am I not your Lord?" They said:*

1 *ʿĀlam al-dharr*, translated here as 'the tiny particles', refers to the primordial form of existence which was purely spiritual. (Ed.)

"*Yes! We bear witness.*" (7:172)

The gist of it is that as the system of reward and punishment in thenext world has full connection with the life before it, that is, with the life of this world from the perspective of obedience and disobedience, in the same way the obedience and disobedience of this world has full connection with another earlier life, relatively speaking, and that is theworld of tiny particles.

So, the Imām's word in the tradition, "So this is the word of God: *And if they were sent back, they would certainly go back...*" means that if they were sent back from the courtyard of the gathering place to the world, they would certainly go back to what they had been forbidden, and most surely they are liars right from the world of tiny particles because they spoke lie before God in that world. This is exactly what the Imām's word in the first tradition means: *and if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden*, surely they are cursed in origin, that is, in the world of tiny particles, because they spoke lie in it.

Accordingly, these two traditions contain a fourth way of the verse's explanation, other than the three explanations given earlier.

(9) A'mash narrates from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from the Holy Prophet that he said about the Divine Word: *O our grief for our neglecting it...* The people of the Fire will see their places in the garden, then they will say: "O our grief for our neglecting it." (*Majma' al-bayān*)

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Verses 33–36

These verses intend to console the Holy Prophet against the offensive accusations of the polytheists regarding his mission, and to placate his soul with the promise of definite victory, and to explain that the religious call is based on human free will: whoever wants, he would believe and whoever wants, he would disbelieve; because definite divine power and will do not interfere in itto compel them to accept it; and if God had pleased, He would certainly have gathered them all on guidance.

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ ۖ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَٰكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

(6:33) We know indeed that what they say certainly grieves you, but surely they do not call you a liar; but the unjust deny the communications of Allah

Qad in its past tense, denotes determination; and, in future tense, denotes diminution, and sometimes it denotes determination also, and this is the meaning intended in this verse. *Ḥazana* and *aḥzana* both have same meaning: to grieve; and it has been recited in both ways.

His Word: *lā yukadhdhibūnaka* ('they do not call you a liar'), with a doubling sign, is also recited with it as *lā yukdhibūnaka*; apparently *fa* (but surely they...) is for separating it from the previous sentence. Apparently, the meaning is:

'We know indeed that their talk certainly grieves you, but it should not grieve you, because their denial does not return to you since you do notinvite except towards Us, and you have no role in it except to conveythe message; rather they are being unjust to Our verses and reject them.'

The content of those four verses gives the meaning of the divine words: *And whoever disbelieves let not his disbelief grieve you; to Us is their return, then will We inform them of what they did; surely Allah is the Knower of what is in the breasts* (31:23). *Therefore let not their speech grieve you; surely We know what they do in secret and what they do openly* (36:76); and other such verses which were revealed for the consolation of the Holy Prophet.

This explanation is based on the recital of the term with (nunnation) the doubling sign.

But based on the recital without the doubling sign, it would mean: Don't be grieved because they don't defeat you by proving your lie i what you call them to, and they don't refute your proof with a counter proof. They, in fact, are being unjust to the divine communication by rejecting it, and to God is their return.

Also, His Word: "but the unjust deny the communications of God." The apparent style of speech demanded that it were said: 'but they...' (instead of 'but the unjust...'). Yet the use of the noun in place of pro- noun aims at showing that their denial emanates from their injustice, not from ignorance or other shortcomings; it is only based on transgression, rebellion and haughtiness, and God will soon raise them, then they will return to Him (and He will deal with them accordingly). It is for this reason that the style has changed from first person to the third, and it says, 'the communications of God', instead of 'Our communications', in order to show that this behavior of theirs is in opposition of the position of divinity, and it is a position that nothing can stand to it.

The verse has been explained in other ways too:

One: The majority have said that it means: They do not call you a liar as a belief in their hearts; rather they display that denial by their mouths out of obstinacy only.

Two: They do not call you a liar, rather they call Me a liar, becausedenying you actually return to Me, and you are not an exclusive target for it. This explanation is other than what we have described earlier, although it is near to it. These two interpretations are based on the recital with doubling sign.

Three: They did not find you a liar. (It's like) the Arabs' saying:We fought them and we did not find them cowards.

The correct interpretation is what was said earlier.

وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَىٰ مَا كُذِّبُوا وَأُوذُوا حَتَّىٰ أَتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَلَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِنْ نَبَإِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

(6:34) And certainly messengers before you were rejected, but they were patient on being rejected and persecuted until our help came to them; and there is none to change the words of Allah, and certainly there has come to you some information about the

messengers.

It guides the Holy Prophet to the way of the past prophets, and it is the way of exercising patience in the cause of God; and God, the Sublime, has said: *These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance* (6:90).

And His Word: "until Our help came to them", describe the good result of their patience, and point to the Divine promise of the help. Also, in His Saying: "and there is none to change the Word of God", emphasize the promise mentioned in the preceding speech and solidify it. It also points to what has been described in 58:21: *Allah has written down: "I will most certainly prevail, I and My messengers;"* and in 37:171–2: *And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the messengers: Most surely they shall be the assisted ones.*

The phrase: "none to change" in "and there is none to change the Word of God" negates any supposed element of change whether it befrom God's side (in the sense that His will changes about a decision byerasing it after having willed it or cancels it after confirming it) or fromsomeone else's side (in the sense that the other overcomes Him and subdues Him to do contrary to what He had wished so that He were to change what He had confirmed and to alter it in one way or another).

It appears from it that these words about which God has said that they are unchangeable things beyond 'the tablet of eraser and affirmation'.1 So, the word of God, the speech of God and the promise of God in the Qur'anic usage mean the definite conclusion which does not accept any change. God says: *He said: "The truth then is and the truth do I speak..."* (38:84). *... and Allah speaks the truth*; (33:4). *Now surely Allah's promise is true* (10:55). *Allah will not fail in* (*His promise*), (39:20). A detailed discussion about the meaning of "Word of God" and similar phrases was given under the verse: *...among them are they to whom Allah spoke...* (2:253).

The words at the end of the verse, "and certainly there has come to you some information about the messengers", affirm and offer the witness for the words, "And certainly messengers before you were rejected." It is possible to infer from it that this chapter was revealed after some Meccanchapters which

1 The table of eraser and affirmation (*lawḥu al-maḥwi wa al-ithbāt*) refers to the partial knowledge that God exposes to His angels and selected humans who assume the consequences which are not definitive, and hence the use of terms 'erase' and 'Affirm'. Of course, God knows the final outcome of all issues. (Ed.)

narrate the stories of the prophets, like the chapters: al-Shuarā', Maryam, etc. And definitely these chapters were revealed after the chapters like: al-'Alaq and al-Muddaththir. Therefore, this chapter, al-An'ām, falls in the third stratum of the chapters revealed at Mecca before *hijrah*. And God knows better.

وَإِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْأَرْضِ
أَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيَهُمْ بِآيَةٍ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ ۚ فَلَا
تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(6:35) And if their turning away is hard on you, then if you can seek an opening (to go down) into the earth or a ladder (to ascend) to heaven so that you should bring them a sign and if Allah had pleased He would certainly have gathered them all on guidance, therefore be not of the ignorant.

al-Rāghib said:

> "*al-nafaq* (the penetrating path; the tunnel in the earth); God says: 'then if you can seek an opening (to go down) into the earth'; and from it comes the expression 'jerboa's tunnel (*nāfiqā'*),' and 'the jerboa dug the tunnel.' And from it is the term *al-nifāq*, and it means entering the religion from one door and going out of it from another door; and accordingly (He) has drawn attention to it with His Word: *surely the hypocrites are the transgressors* (9:67), that is out of the religion; and God has made the hypocrites worse than the disbelievers, when He said: *Surely the hypocrites are in the lowest stage of the Fire* (4:145); and *nayfaq* (the two string holes) of trousers is well-known."

And He also said:

> "*al-Sullam* (ladder) that which is used to ascend high places and it gives hope of safety; then it was made the name of everything which is used to ascend to a high thing like a cause; God says: *Or have they the means by which they listen?* (52:38); "*...or a ladder* (*to ascend up*) *to heaven,*" (6:35); and a poet says: "Even if he got the means to ascend to heaven with a ladder."

The reply of the conditional clause in the verse is deleted because it is understood; the implied sentence (as has been said) would be: If you can obtain this and that, then do it.

The 'sign' in the phrase: "so that you should bring them a sign", means a sign that would compel them to believe. The statement: "And if their turning away is hard on you...", is addressed to the Holy Prophet through the way of the Qur'an , which is the best divine sign that proves the truthfulness of his mission, and whose miraculous dimension is nearer to their understanding since they (the Arabs) were eloquent and wise. The verse thus means that their turning away should not grieve you and you should not take it hard, because this world is place of free will. Also, the invitation to the truth and its acceptance are based on the path of free will; and that you cannot obtain a sign which would compel them to believe. It is so because God does not want from them a faith except through free will; that is why He has not created a sign which would compel the people to believe and obey. If God had so wished, all the people would have entered into the true faith; and so all these disbelievers would have joined the group which believes in you. So, you should not be worried or concerned at their turning away, lest you be among those who are ignorant of the divine cognition.

Someone has suggested that: "you should bring them a sign" means a sign better than the one We have sent you with, that is the Qur'an . But it does not agree with the context, and especially the words: *and if Allah had pleased He would certainly have gathered them all on guidance* (6:35), as it clearly points to compulsion.

It appears from this that the pleasure here means that God would will for them to be guided to faith in a way that they would be forced to accept it, and this would negate their free will. This is what the apparent context of the noble verse demands.

But God, the Blessed, in other similar verses in His Book has not based negation of His will on necessity of compulsion. As He says: *And if We had pleased we would certainly have given to every soul its guidance, but the word* (which had gone forth) *from Me was just: "I will certainly fill hell with jinn and men together."* (32:13). He points with it to His similar statement: *He said: "The truth then is and the truth do I speak: That I will most certainly fill hell with you and with those among them who follow you, all;"* (38:84–85). Thus, the Almighty has clarified that the negation of His will about guiding them all is actually based on His will which He decreed when the Satan swore against Him that he will misguide all of them except those of His servants who are purified ones.

And the firm decision has been ascribed in another place to their going

astray. God says in the story of Adam and the Satan: *He said: "My Lord! Because Thou hast made me stray from the right way, I will certainly make* (evil) *fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will cause them all to deviate, except Thy servants among them, the devotedones." He said: "This is a right way with Me. Surely as regards My servants, you have no authority over them except those who follow youof the deviators. And surely hell is the promised place of them all"* (15:39–43). And Satan too does ascribe it to them as God has quoted his talk to them on the Day of Resurrection: *And the Satan shall say after the affair is decided: "Surely Allah promised you the promise of truth, and I gave you promise then failed to keep them to you, and I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyedme, therefore do not blame me but blame yourselves: I cannot be your aider* (now) *nor can you be my aiders; surely I disbelieved in your associating me* (with God) *before"* (14:22).

The verses show that sins, including polytheism, lead to man's deviation, and the deviation in its turn ends at the man himself. It isnot against what appears from other verses that the man has no will except when God pleases for him to have a will, as He says: *Surely this is a reminder, so whoever pleases takes to his Lord a way. And you do not please except that Allah please* (76:29–30). *It is naught but a reminder for the worlds, for him among you who pleases to go straight. And you do not please except that Allah please, the Lord of the worlds* (81:27–29).

So, although the will of the man depends on the will of God, the Blessed, in its materialization, yet God, the Blessed, does not affirm any will for the man, except when he becomes ready for it through the goodness of his inner self and is exposed to the divine mercy. God says: *"...and guides to Himself those who turn;"* (13:27),that is to Him. And as for a transgressor, whose heart is deviated, who clings to the earth and is inclined to deviation, God does not wish his guidancenor does He engulf him with His mercy, as He says: *He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it, but He does not cause to err by it* (any) *except the transgressors* (2:26); *...but when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside...* (61:5); *And if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby; but he clung tothe earth and followed his low desire* (7:176).

In short, the religious call does not proceed except on the way of free choice; and divine communications do not descend except with consideration of free choice; and God does not guide towards Himself except him who is exposed to His mercy and is ready for His guidance through the path

of free will.

With this explanation another difficult problem is solved: We agree that if God were to send a sign which would force them to believe and compel them to accept the religious call, it would be contrary to the basis of the free will on which the structure of religious call stands. However, why it is not possible for God that He should wish belief for all the people, in the same way as He wishes the belief of those who have accepted the faith, so that a sign should come down to lead them to the guidance and cover them in faith, without negating with it their free will and their independence in action.

By looking at the issue per se, although it is possible but it is contrary to the general system in the world of cause and effect, and the system of ability and munificence. Guidance is extended to him, who fears God and purifies his soul, and: *he will indeed be successful who purifies it* (91:9); and misguidance is not inflicted upon anyone except on him who turns away from the remembrance of his Lord and corrupts the soul: *and he indeed will fail who corrupts it* (91:10). Infliction of misguidance means that man is prevented from guidance. God says: *Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away. And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he aught to strive and he is a believer;* (as for) *these, their striving shall surely be accepted. All do We aid—these as well as those—out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:18–20). So, God aids every soul from His bounty according to what he deserves; if he wants good he is given, and if he wants evil he is given, that is, he is prevented from good. If God were to wish for every man, be he good or bad, that he should wish good and dedicate himself to faith and piety through free choice, it would have negated the general system and destroyed the issue of the cause and effect.

It is supported by the next verse, that is, the Word of the Sublime: *Only those accept who listen...*, which will be explained as follows:

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ ۘ وَالْمَوْتَىٰ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(6:36) Only those accept who listen; and (as to) the dead, Allah will raise them, then to him they shall be returned.

The verse elaborates what was described in the preceding one: *And if their turning away is hard on you, then if you can seek an opening... therefore*

be not of the ignorant: In short, you have no ability to dissuade them from this turning away, nor can you get for them a sign which would lead them to the faith. So, this verse explains that they are like the dead, they have no perception nor do they hear, so they cannot perceive the meaning of the religious call nor can they hear the invitation of the caller, that is the Holy Prophet.

This huge multitude of the people which we see is of two kinds: One group is alive and they hear, and only those respond positively who do hear. The other group is of the dead ones who do not hear although they appear in the form of the alive ones. These will hear the speech only when God will raise them (in the Hereafter); and He will certainly raise them and then they will hear what they could not hear in this world, as God describes their condition: *And could you but see when the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord: "Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard, therefore send us back, we will do good; surely* (*now*) *we are certain;*" (32:12).

This talk is put forward as an allusion: 'Those who listen' refers to the believers and 'the dead' means those who turn away from acceptingthe call, be they polytheists or others. In the Divine Speech, believers have been portrayed as enjoying life and hearing, and disbelievershave been described as afflicted with death and deafness, as God says: *Is he who was dead, then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness isthat of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (6:122). *Surely you do not make the dead to hear, and you do not make thedeaf to hear the call when they go back retreating. Nor can you be a guide to the blind out of their error; you cannot make to hear* (any one) *except those who believe in Our communications, so they submit* (27:80–81). There are many such verses in the Qur'an .

In some previous discourses another meaning for these attributes has been repeatedly given, which the majority of the exegetes have explained as allusion and simile, and that they may be interpreted in their real meaning. So, refer to it.

The verse proves that God will certainly make the unbelievers and the polytheists understand the truth and make them hear His call also in the Hereafter as He made the believers understand and hear His call in this world. So, the man be he a believer or an unbeliever cannot escape from understanding the truth, sooner or later.

Examining Narrations

(1) Abu al-Jārūd narrates from Abū Jaʿfar that he said: "The Messenger of God earnestly liked that al-Ḥārith b.ʿĀmir b. Nawfal b. ʿAbd Manāf to accept Islam. He invited him and tried hard to make him a Muslim. But Nawfal was overcome by wretchedness. The Messenger of God felt very much badabout it and so God sent the revelation: *And if their turning away is hard on you, then if you can seek an opening into the earth*; means a tunnel. (*al-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

Author's comment: This tradition is weak and suffers from missing links in the chain of narration. Moreover, it does not agree with the apparent meaning of a multitude of traditions which show that this chapter was revealed all together. Although it may be interpreted in this way that the above-mentioned cause had appeared before the chapter was revealed, and then this verse pointed to the established cause by the way of application.

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Verses 37–55

The verses offer multifarious arguments against polytheists regarding monotheism and the sign of prophethood.

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(6:37) And they say: "Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Surely Allah is able to send down a sign, but most of them do not know."

It describes how they prodded for a sign to be sent down with the purpose of showing the inability of the Holy Prophet. When they uttered these words there already was before them the best of signs, that is, the noble Qur'an which used to come down to them chapter by chapter and verse after verse and was recited before them from time to time. Thus, it was understood that the sign which they demanded was a sign other than the Qur'an, and that they did not count it as a satisfactory sign with which their souls would be pleased because of their foolishness and frenzy.

The bias for their deities prompted them to cut themselves off from Almighty God as though He were not their Lord; so they said: "Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" They did not say, from our Lord, or, from God or some words like that, so that they may belittle the Holy Prophet's cause and highlight his inability. They meant to say: If what he claims and to what he calls to be truth, then let his Lord, to Whom he calls, stand for him and help him, by sending down on him a sign which would prove the truthfulness of his claim.

Such a demand emanates from them because of their ignorance of two things:

One: The idolaters believed that their deities were independent in those affairs of the world which were ascribed to them even though they claimed that they enjoyed the position of intercession. Thus, the god of war or peace had authority on the affair they managed without being disturbed by another factor. Likewise, there were god of land, god of sea, god of love, god of hate

and so on; so nothing remained for God to manage because He has divided all affairs between His helpers, although they were His intercessors and He is the Lord of lords; so God is unable to negate the affair of their deities by sending down a sign which would lead to negation of their divinity.

This assumption of theirs and support for it in their heart was prompted by what they had heard from the Jews of Ḥijāz that the hand of God was fettered, in no way can He alter the existing system, nor can He disturb the common norm of the world of the causes (and effects).

Two: The signs sent down from God, Glory be to Him, if they are among the things which God particularly reserved to one of His messengers (without the people demanding them), then they are the proofs which prove the truthfulness of the messenger's claim (without their being any immediate danger to the people who have been invited (if they don't accept it)); like the staff and the bright hand for Moses, and raising the dead to life, healing the blind and leper and creating the bird for Jesus, and the Noble Qur'an for Muḥammad (may God's blessings be on him and his progeny and on the Prophets).

But if the sign was sent on demand of the people, then it is the established system of God to pass judgement about them upon its coming down—if they believed, well and good, but if they persisted in their rejection, chastisement was sent on them and they were given no respite, as was the case with the signs of Noah, Hūd and Ṣāliḥ and others; and there are numerous verses in the Qur'an which prove it, as God says: *And they say: "Why has not an angel been sent down to him?" And had We sent down an angel, the matter would have certainlybeen decided and then they would not have been respited* (6:8). *And nothing could have hindered Us that We should send signs except that the ancients rejected them; and We gave to Thamūd the she-camel—a manifest sign—but on her account they did injustice...* (17:59).

And the noble verse, that is: *And they say: "Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Surely Allah is able to send down a sign, but most of them do not know",* points to both aspects together.

So, He described that certainly God is able to send down any sign He wished. How was it possible to suppose that the one having the name of God would not have comprehensive power? The name used in the question, "*Rabb* = Lord" has been changed in this reply to "*Allah*" in order that it may indicate the proof of the decision; unrestricted divinity combines all perfection without there being any limit or condition to limit or fetter it;

so it has unrestricted power. It was their ignorance of the divine position which exhorted them to demand a sign with intention of showing disability of the Holy Prophet.

Moreover, they did not know that the coming down of a sign that they had demanded was not in favor of their well-being, and their venture to demand it exposed them to the destruction of the whole group and to being completely rooted out. The proof that this meaning was somewhat intended in this speech is found in the Divine Word at the end of these argumentations, *Say: "If that which you desire to hasten were with me, the matter would have certainly been decided between you and me; and Allah best knows the unjust"* (6:58).

The Divine Speech (6:37) contains the words: *nazzala* and *yunazzilu* with intensified pronunciation; it shows that they had demanded a gradual sign, or several signs which would be sent down one after the other; as is seen in other places in the Divine Book wheretheir demand is quoted. For example: *And they say: "We will by no means believe in you until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for us, or you should have a garden of palms and grapes...or you should ascend into heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read;"* (17:90–93). *And those who do not hope for Our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or* (why) *do we not see our Lord?"* (25:21). *And those who disbelieve say: "Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once?"* (25:32).

Ibn Kathīr is reported to have recited the above-mentioned two verbs without intensified pronunciation.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ ۚ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

(6:38)And there is no animal that walks upon the earth or a bird that flies with its two wings but (they are) genera like yourselves; We have not neglected anything in the Book, then to their Lord shall they be gathered:

al-Dābbah is every animal which creeps or moves on the earth; it is mostly used for the horse; *al-dabb* and *al-dabīb* mean soft crawling.

al-Ṭā'ir is that which glides in the air with its two wings; Its plural is

al-Ṭayr like *al-rākib* and *al-rakb. al-ummah* is a group of people whom a single purpose unites, like a single religion, one culture, one time or one place; its basic meaning is to intend; they say *amma*, *yaummu* when he intends something; *al-ḥashr* is to gather the people by force for battle, evacuation or other such social matters.

Apparently, description of the bird with the phrase that flies with its two wings stands parallel to the phrase: "that walks upon the earth", describing the animal. In short it means: And there is no earth-bound or aerial animal... Apart from that, this elaborates description and negates suspicion of metaphorical use since 'flying' is mostly used for fast movement, in the same way as 'crawling' is used for light movement; and so it was possible to imagine that flying indicated fast movement as it was put side by side with crawling; this idea was removed by the clause, "that flies with its two wings."

A Talk on Animal Societies

The verse is addressed to the people; and it says that animals, be they earth-bound or aerial, are genera like men. It does not mean that they are groups having a multitude of numbers, because *ummah* is not used for merely great numbers, rather it is used to describe a multitude that is joined by a single comprehensive goal, be it involuntary or voluntary, which its individuals seek to achieve. Nor does *ummah* here mean that animals of different species are each joined together in a special type of life, sustenance and cohabitation: in procreation, shelter and all affairs of life, because although this amount of commonality is correct to declare that their society resembles that of man, but, the words at the end of the verse, *then to their Lord shall they be gathered*, show that the resemblance does not mean merely similarity in food, cohabitation and shelter; rather there is another aspect of similarity which makes them similar to man and that is: *al-ḥashr*, their being gathered to God. And being gathered to God is naught but a type of conscious life, which pushes the man to his felicity and infelicity; it is possible for a man to get in this world delicious food, agreeable marriage tie and flourishing habitation and yet he is not happy in his life because he is afflicted with injustice and iniquity. Or, on the other hand, he is overwhelmed by hardships, distress and afflictions and yet he is happy in his life, delighted with the perfection of humanity and light of servitude.

Rather, the conscious human life, or you may say, the human nature, and what supports it from the prophetic call, has established for man a

custom combined of belief and action; if he adopts and follows it and the society agreed with him on it, then he would be happy in both lives: here as well as the Hereafter; and if he adopts it alone, he will be happy with it in the Hereafter or in the world and the Hereafter together. But if he did not act on it and failed to take it wholly or partially then it will result in his wretchedness in this world and the Hereafter.

This system laid down for man is combined in two words: to push for goodness and obedience and to restrain from evil and disobedience; or you may say: to call towards justice and steadfastness, and to forbid injustice and deviation from truth. It is so because man, by his sound nature, likes certain things such as justice for his self or for others, and dislikes certain things such as injustice to himself or to others; then the divine religion supports it and further elaborates its details for him.

This is the gist of what has become clear to us in many preceding discussions, and many Qur'anic verses affirm and support it. Like the divine words: *And* (I swear by) *the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it: He will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it* (91:7–10). *Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge betweenthe people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path* (2:213).

In depth consideration of the behavior of those dumb animals that interact with man in many affairs of life, and pondering on conditions of a species among them in the progress of its life and living, prove to us that they do have, like man, individual and collective beliefs and opinions on which they base their movements and stillness in endeavoring to continue, similar to a series of beliefs and opinions on which man bases his fluctuations in stages of this world's life.

Thus, an individual among us desires food, marriage, child or other such things, or dislikes injustice, poverty or such other things. So, it appears to him that it is incumbent on him to search for food, or to eat it, or to store it; likewise, to marry, procreate and similar things. Also, he understands that it is forbidden and unlawful to him to tolerate injustice or endure the

affliction of poverty, etc. So, he moves or remains still according to the ways these opinions prepare for him.

Likewise, an individual animal, as we observe him, in search of the necessities of its life resorts to systematic movements through which it manoeuvres to fulfil its needs about food, cohabitation and shelter, which leaves no room for doubt that it perceives its needs and understands how it would be fulfilled. Thus, it has opinions and beliefs with which it rises to catch beneficial items and repulse harmful things. Often we find in it various kinds of tricks and devices to get its prey and to be secure from enemy, using individual or collective ways which man has not understood except after spending centuries and eons of his species' life.

The scholars who have researched about animals, have found in many of their species like ant, bee and termite, wonderful traces of civilization and sociology, fine points of manufacturing and subtle aspects of norms and policies which are generally not found except among civilized and developed human groups.

Verily, the noble Qur'an has exhorted man to understand the animal world and to ponder on their creation and actions in general, as God says: *And in your creation and in what He spreads abroad of animals there are signs for a people that are sure* (45:4). It has invited us to minutely observe the affairs of many among them, like the cattle, the bird, the bee and the ant.

These opinions and beliefs on which we find the animals basing their activities, in spite of their differences in the life affairs and goals, are not devoid of the inciting and repelling forces; at the same time they do not lack in appreciation of something and disapproval of some others; nor are they free from the sense of justice or injustice.

This is supported by what we see of the difference among the individuals of any species of animals in its behavior. How clear difference is found in one horse and another, in one ram and another and in one cock and another, one is hot-tempered while the other is tame and of mild disposition.

It is likewise supported by other minor aspects like love and hate, magnanimity and mercy or hard-heartedness and transgression, etc. which we find between individuals of a species. Indeed we have found its parallels among human individuals, and we have seen it affecting the belief in the goodness and evilness of actions, and justice and injustice in deeds. It also affects man's life in the next world and is the basis of his being gathered and reckoning of his deeds as well as their recompense in form of reward or chastisement

in the next life.

Now that our discussion has reached this stage, it might appear to us that the animals too are subject to gathering (*al-ḥashr*) like that of the human beings. God counts application of justice and injustice, and piety and debauchery on man's deeds as the basis of the gathering and proves it with it, as God says: *Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who are pious like the wicked?* (38:28). Rather He counts negation of gathering in what He has created of the heaven, the earth and what is between them, negation of His deed and its turning into play or recklessness, as is seen in the preceding verse: *And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve on account of the Fire* (ibid.:27).

Will an animal—other than man—be gathered to God like a man will be? If yes, then is its gathering similar to that of man, that there will be weighing and reckoning of its deeds, after which he will enjoy blessings of the Garden or suffer in the Fire, according to how it discharged its responsibility in the world? Does the establishment of the worldly responsibilities depend on the raising of the messengers and sending down of the law? Is the messenger who is sent to the animal from its own species or from men?

These are the questions coming to the mind at this juncture.

As for the first question: (Is there gathering for an animal other than man?), the end phrase in this verse, *then to their Lord shall they be gathered,* adequately answers it; and nearer to it is the verse: *And when the wild animals are gathered* (81:5).

In fact, there are very numerous verses which show that the heavens and the earth will be brought back, as will be the sun, the moon and the stars, also the *jinn*, stones, idols and all those who were worshiped as partners of God. Add to it the gold and the silver, as they will be heated in the Fire of the hell and will be used to brand the foreheads and sides of those who neglect paying *zakāt*. There are many verses of this theme, which need not be quoted here; as for the traditions of this theme, they are beyond counting.

As for the second question (Will the animals' gathering be similar to that of man? Will their deeds be brought forth and reckoned, resulting in the blessings or punishment?)

Reply: (The reckoning of deeds and judgement) is the concomitantof the gathering. It means that the individuals will be brought together and

driven by force. As for the likes of the heaven and the earth and similar things like the sun, the moon, the stone, etc., the word, gathering (*al-ḥashr*), has not been used for them. For instance: *On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens* (as well), *and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, theSupreme* (14:48). *...and the whole earth shall be in His grip on the Day of Resurrection and the heavens rolled up in His right hand...* (39:67). *And the sun and the moon are brought together* (75:9). *Surely you and what you worship besides Allah are the firewood of hell; to it you shall come. Had these been gods, they would not have come to it...* (21:98–99)

Moreover, the reason given in the Divine Speech for gathering of the people is to deliver final judgement between them regarding the truth in which they had differed. God says: *Surely your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differ;* (32:25). "*... then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed...* (3:55). There are many such verses.

All of this is based on rewarding the good-doer and taking revengefrom the unjust for his injustice, as God says: *Surely We will give punishment to the guilty* (32:22). *Therefore do not think Allah failing in His promise to His messengers; surely Allah is Mighty, the Lord of Retribution. On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens* (as well), *and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Supreme* (14:47–48). These two attributes, that is, good-doing and injustice are present in the animals' activities to some extent.

This is (also) supported by the apparent meaning of the divine words: *And were Allah to punish men for what they earn, He would not leave on the back of it any creature, but He respites them till an appointed term...* (35:45). It evidently means that if injustice of the people caused divine censure it would be because it is injustice; and injustice is widespread among all that is called creature—man and all animals; thus it would mean that God would destroy every creature on the earth—although some have said that 'creature' in this verse particularly means man.

The fact that censure and revenge will cover all animals on theDay of Resurrection, does not mean that animals will be equal to man in perception and will, or that dumb animal will rise up to the rank of man in its psychology and spirituality. Such supposition is rejected evidently, and the effects appearing in animals and man refute it.

And that is because mere commonalty in censure and revenge, or

reckoning and recompense between man and animal does not prove that they are equal in all aspects, as it does not prove in even closer commonly between individual men themselves that reckoning of theirdeeds should be done in the same way as far as its diligence and questioning is concerned: (it cannot be that) a wise man and an idiotor a person of sound mind and a weakened one should be on the same level.

This is in spite the fact that God has described about some animals such fine understanding and sensitive intelligence which is not very far from the level of a man of average knowledge and understanding. Look for example at the ant of Solomon (Sulaymān) which is quoted as saying: *Until when they came to the valley of the ants, an ant said: "O ants! Enter your houses* (*that*) *Solomon and his hosts may not crush you while they do not know* (27:18), and what He has quoted of the talk of hoopoe to him explaining his absence: "*I comprehend that which you do not comprehend and I have brought to you a sure information from Sheba. Surely I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne. I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah, and the Satan has made their deeds fair seeming to them, and thus turned them from the way, so they do not go aright* (27:22–24)..." (to the end of the story). When an intelligent scholar meditates on these verses which demonstrate the understanding and perception from those animals and weighs its importance, he would certainly know that the amount of understanding and awareness depends on a lot of cognition and multifarious perceptions related to simple as well as complicated ideas.

This may be supported by conclusions that the zoologists have reached at based on their extensive studies, including raising different kinds of animals, and they observed their amazing conditions which cannot normally appear except from a being which enjoys sublime will, deep understanding and sharp perception.

Coming to the third and fourth questions: Do animals receive their commandments in the world through a messenger who is sent to them and a revelation which is sent upon him? And is this messenger sent to a species of animals exactly an individual of that species? The fact is that the animal world until now is unknown to us and a curtain is let down before our eyes. Therefore, there is no benefit in getting into such discussions, and there is no outcome except conjecture and guess-work. The Divine Speech apparently does not undertake to explain any aspect of it; and there is nothing

in the traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet and the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt, blessing and peace of God be upon them, which could be relied upon regarding this subject.

So, the conclusion is that the animal societies, like the human society, contain the element of divine religion that is nourished from its nature in the same way as the religion gets nourishment from the human nature and prepares it to be gathered towards God, as the natural religion prepares the man for gathering and recompense even though the observation of the animal's condition, compared to that of the man's (and it is supported by the Qur'anic verses which describe subjugation of the things to man, and his superiority over animals in general), shows that animals have not been given details of human cognition nor are they subjected to duties of intricate burdens placed upon the man.

Now, we return to the text of the verse regarding the Sublime's Word: *And there is no animal that walks upon the earth nor a bird that flies with its two wings but* (they are) *genera like yourselves,* prove that the animal societies which are found in every species of animals, are indeed based on perceptible common goals to which everyspecies of animals proceed, in spite of their difference in perception and will, just like the man.

This is not confined to the physical goals such as nutrition, growth and procreation which are limited to this world's life, but its jurisdiction continues to the affairs after death and prepares it for another life which is connected to felicity and infelicity nourished from perception and will.

Objection: An objection may be raised here that people generally believe that other than man all kinds of animals are deprived of the gift of free choice and that is why an animal's actions are counted, like that of vegetables, natural and involuntary, since it is observed in its conditions that it cannot resist from doing an action which contains its desired benefit (like cat when it sees a rat or a lion when it sees its prey), and from fleeing when it sees an enemy that it fears (like a rat when it sees a cat and a deer when it sees a lion). Thus there is no meaning of voluntary felicity and infelicity in an animal, other than human beings.

Reply: However, meditation on the meaning of free choice and on psychological conditions the man goes through in doing his voluntary actions removes this objection. The perception and will through which man's voluntary actions are done have been actually bestowed upon man, for example, because he is a conscious species and manages the external elements for

utilizing them in continuation of his existence by distinguishing what harms it from what benefits it. That is why the divine grace has equipped it with perception and will; so he distinguishes through his conscious perception between what harms it from what benefits it. When a benefit is established, he wills and does it; so whatever is from the issues that are of clear benefit (and in establishing that it is beneficial, he does not need more than its existence and knowledge about it), he wills to do it at once and manages it without hesitation, as is the case mostly with inborn potentials like the act of breathing.

But those issues whose benefit are not obvious, either because they are marked with defective causes or surrounded by some external or dogmatic snags, then mere knowledge of its existence is not enough for willing to do it since there is no surety of benefiting from it. Pursuing such things depends on contemplation on them, for example, on what their defects, snags are and on meditation so that it may be known whether it is beneficial or harmful. If meditation shows that it is beneficial, the will related to it takes shape and it is done, in the same way as if it were of clear benefit which does not require any meditation.

Let us say, a hungry man finds a food with which he can satisfy his hunger: he may be doubtful about it, whether it is a good food, right for nourishment, or it is bad, putrid, poisoned or containing harmful ingredients? Also, whether it is his own property and (if it is his property), is there a problem in using it (e.g., it has been kept for a future emergency or he may be fasting, etc), or is it someone else's property which he cannot use? Then he will stop from hastening towards it, and will continue contemplating until he becomes sure of one alternative. So, if he decided that it is allowed, it will be counted as beneficial; he will not wait for anything, if he wills he will use and manage it. Also, if he had no doubt about it, and he knew from the beginning that the food was good and right for nourishment, he will proceed to it without contemplation or meditation; the knowledge of its existence will not be separate from the will of using it at all.

In short, the topic of free choice means that when man cannot decide between some things whether they are beneficial or harmful, he distinguishes it through contemplation and meditation, and chooses one of the alternatives. On the other hand, if he is able to distinguish them from the beginning, then he wills it and does it without delay and does not require any contemplation. So, man chooses what he thinks is beneficial to him either

with contemplation or without it; and no contemplation is required except for removal of snags in making the decision.

If you look minutely at the condition of the humans who have free will in their actions, you will find a major difference among them on the basis of their choice, that is, in their spiritual states and psychological conditions such as bravery and cowardice, continence and greed, briskness and laziness, and dignity and brazenness; also in strength of discernment and its weakness, and correctness of thought and its incorrectness. Many are the times a greedy person finds himself under compulsion and deprived of free will in places where he desires whole-hearted involvement in it, while a righteous moral person would not care about. Perhaps a coward would think a slight harm he receives in a great task or fight to be a sufficient excuse for himself to negate his free choice, while a brave self-respecting man does not think of death or any bodily discomfort anything beyond strength, and he will not give any importance to a great calamity in the way of his causes. Sometimes an idiot chooses an alternative based on a simple groundless imagination while a wise man would think of such option as a sport and play. Likewise, actions of indiscriminating children are product of free choice accompanied by some meditation but a sane adult would not care for it even a little. Often in our normal conversations we consider some of our actions based on compulsion or coercion when it is accompanied with some social justifications which, in fact, are not based on reality, for example, a cigarette smoker justifies it as addiction, a sleepy man brings excuse of laziness, and a thief or an embezzler offer excuse of poverty.

It is this obvious difference in elements and causes of free choice and the vast latitude in the level of voluntary actions that has led the religion and all other social customs to define the voluntary action as what the average members of human society consider to be voluntary; and they have based on it the validity of applying the command and the prohibition, the punishment and the reward, and the right of utilization, etc.; and they excuse one who lacks the average ability and understanding through which an average man does voluntary action.

So, this average which is counted as voluntary and negates voluntaryism of other actions beyond it, is so according to religious or social decision in which welfare of religion or society is preserved, although from the perspective of nature the boundary of voluntaryism is greater than that.

Contemplation on the above discourse makes us sure that the animal,

other than man, is not totally deprived of the gift of free choice, although it is weaker than what we find in average humans. And this is based on what we observe in many animals, especially the domesticated ones, the effects of hesitation in some situations which are coupled with some impediments; likewise when they desist from action because of rebuke, threat or training. All this proves that there is in their 'souls' (*nafs*) the ability to decide to do or not to do an action; and that is the basis of free choice in reality, although contemplation is very weak in them and does not reach the level of what we find in an average human.

And since it is correct that the animal, other than humans, is not totally devoid of free choice even if a weak one, then it will be okay if Almighty God makes the average level of free choice among them as the basis of duties relevant to them that we do not comprehend; or He may deal with them based on the gift of free choice in a different way which we do not understand except that this gift is found in them in a way that it would justify to reward them in case of obedience and to censure and punish them in case of disobedience as God knows it better.

Thus, His, the Sublime's Word: *...We have not neglected anything in the Book...*, is a parenthetical clause. Obviously, the item which is the object of neglect is the Book; and the word, *anything*, refers to the exaggeration with which negligence occurs. The verse means: There isno such thing whose consideration was required, the fulfilment of whose right was obligatory and the description of whose attributes wasnecessary in the Book but that it has been done without any negligence. And so the Book is perfect and complete.

Now, if 'the Book' refers to the Preserved Tablet—which God has described in several places in His speech as a book which contains the past, the future and the present—then the meaning will be as follows: these generic systems (similar to the humanity's system) are systems upon which divine grace is incumbent; (and it is this grace which makes it incumbent upon Him) to create animals' species so that their creation may not go in vain nor its existence be aimless; and so that these species would not be deprived of the gift of perfection according to their ability of acceptance.

So, the verse, based on this meaning, indicates in particular what the following verses show in general: *...and the bounty of your Lord isnot confined* (17:20). *...there is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock...* (11:56).

But if 'the Book' means the Noble Qur'an—and God has named it the book in various places in His speech—the meaning will be as follows: As the

Noble Qur'an is a book of guidance which guides to the straight path (on the basis of describing the realities of cognizance which had to be explained when leading to the clear truth and pure reality), nothing has been neglected in it in description of all issues on whose knowledge the people's success and happiness depend in their world and the next world, as God says: *...and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything...* (16:89).

In order to understand the reality of the Hereafter, it is incumbent upon the people to clearly know the connection between the gathering (to be raised on the Day of Resurrection as a group) and the shaping of nations in this world that they find among themselves and among all animal species. Moreover, many other benefits spring from it, like perspicacity of God's monotheism and His delicate power and His care related to the affairs of the creatures, and the general system prevalent in the universe. Its most important benefit is the cognizance that the existing things hold fast to its chain from defect to perfection; and some links in that chain contain the circles of animals (including man) and below it with different gradual ranks beginning from the lowest grade in vegetable world to the ranks proximate to man and finally the man.

Verily, God, Glory be to Him, has very forcefully invited the people to understand the animals and to look in the signs consigned in their existence; and has counted it as a way of reaching to the best scientific results that are inseparable with the human happiness, and that is certainty of God, the Blessed, as He says: *And in your* (*own*) *creation and in what He spreads abroad of animals there are signs for a people that are sure;* (45:4). There are very many verses in the noble Qur'an that exhort on looking into the affairs of animals.

Possibly the verse may point to both meanings: The word "the Book" (in 16:89) may mean book in general; and the meaning will be: Surely God, the Blessed, does not neglect any thing in what He writes: Neither in the Book of creation, as He decides and decrees for every species what it deserves to get of the perfection of existence, like the animals species, for each of which He has prepared the blessings of social groupings, as He has done for man, because He found it capable of it; so He did not neglect anything in its affairs. Nor in His Book which is His speech revealed to the people, because He describes in it in cognizance of which is the good of the people and happiness of their present world and the next, and He does not neglect anything in it; as a result He has not neglected anything in the affairsof the

animals' genera. God has described in this verse the reality of what He has gifted to them kind of an existential happiness, which hasmade them conscious genera which proceeds with its existence to God, gathered towards Him, like the man.

Also, His, the Sublime's Saying: *...then to their Lord shall they be gathered*. This verse describes that all of the animals shall be gathered and the life gifted to them is a kind of life which would follow the gathering to God, just as the human life is like that. That is also the reason why He has used the pronouns which are used for those having perception and intelligence; and so He said: *then to their Lord shall they be gathered*; it indicates that the actual basis (of gathering), that is, the matter on which pleasure and displeasure, and reward and punishment revolve, is found in them also.

In this verse the pronouns have changed from the third person to the first person plural then again to the third person relating to God. Meditation on it shows that the basic context is of the third person;and the context changed to the first person plural (*We have not neglected anything in the Book*) because it is a parenthetical clause particularly addressed to the Holy Prophet; and when He finished that statement, the talk returned to the original context.

A very strange explanation has been given by someone who has tried to prove transmigration of souls from this verse. He claims that the soul of man, when it separates from his body at death, is attached to the body of an animal that is appropriate to it in contemptible characteristics which was deep rooted in his psyche, for example, the soul of a crafty person attaches to a fox's body; and the soul of a mischief-monger spiteful person attaches to the body of a wolf; and the soul of the one who hunts follies of the people and their shameful secrets, attaches to the body of a swine; and the soul of a greedy gluttonous man attaches to a cow's body, and so on; and in this way it goes on changing from one body to another, and being punished in this manner, if it was a wretched one having ugly characteristics. And if it was a blessed soul, it would attach after death to a blessed body that enjoys the bounties of blessings, from better human individuals. According to him the meaning of the verse would be: There are no animals out of these animals but are human nations like you who have changed after death to the forms of animals.

But the explanations given earlier make it clear that the verse is far removed from this interpretation. Besides this, the last clause, *then to their*

Lord shall they be gathered, does not agree with this meaning. Moreover, such utterances are so evidently invalid that there is no benefit in analyzing them or discussing about their correctness orincorrectness.

Similarly, strange is what someone else has said about this verse: That the gathering of animals means their death, so there is no question of they being raised after that; or it may mean combined death and rising up.

But, as for the first meaning, it is negated by the apparent meaning of "to their Lord", because there is no sense in death "to God"; and as for the second meaning, it leads to commitment of what is not necessary, because there is no basis of adding death to raising up in the meaning, nor is there anything in the verse that demands it.

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا صُمٌّ وَبُكْمٌ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ ۗ مَنْ يَشَإِ اللَّهُ يُضْلِلْهُ وَمَنْ يَشَأْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٩﴾

(6:39) And they who reject Our communications are deaf and dumb, in utter darkness; whom Allah pleases He causes to err, and whom He pleases He puts on the right way:

The Almighty wants to say that those who reject His communications are deprived of the bounties of hearing, sight and speech, since they are in utter darkness in which eyes do not work, and because of their deafness, they are unable to hear the true word and to respond to it. Also, because of their dumbness, they cannot speak a true word or testify for monotheism and prophethood, and since they are overwhelmed by darkness, they cannot see the way of truth to take it as a path.

As regards His Word, the Sublime: "whom God pleases He causes to err, and whom He pleases He puts on the right way", prove that this deafness, dumbness and falling into utter darkness is the punishment meted out to them as a recompense for their rejecting the communications of God; for God has made the causing of err (attributed to Him) as a sort of a recompense as seen in His Word: *but He does not cause to err by it* (*any*) *except the transgressors* (2:26).

So, their rejection of the divine communications is not the result of their being deaf, dumb, in utter darkness; rather the opposite is true. Accordingly, 'causing them to err', as used in this place, means making them deaf, dumb, in utter darkness; and 'those whom God pleases them to err', points to those

who had rejected His communications.

Conversely, it appears that putting someone on the right way means that God gives him hearing with which he hears, then he responds positively to the Caller to God with his tongue and observes the truth with his sight; and that this is the recompense of him who does not reject the divine communications. So, whomsoever God pleases He causes him to err, and He does not wish to cause anyone to err except he who deserves it; and whomsoever He pleases He puts on the right way, and He does not wish that except for one who exposes himself to His mercy.

We have already discussed the actual meaning of their attributes that God has mentioned: deafness, dumbness, blindness and similar adjectives. The verse, however, indicates another fine point which is inferred from joining and separating in the Divine Speech: "deaf and dumb, in utter darkness." Note that 'deafness' (which is one of their attributes) has been mentioned first followed by 'dumbness' (which is the second adjective) with a conjunction 'And' in between them; then it mentions their being 'in utter darkness' (that is the third adjective) without conjunction. In short, it has conjoined some attributes and separated some others; and He has written in a similar verse the meaning separately, that is His speech about the hypocrites: *Deaf, dumb, blind* (2:18); and in another similar verse with conjunction, as He says about disbelievers: *Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes...* (2:7).

Probably, the fine point indicated in the clause, "deaf and dumb, in utter darkness", is that the deaf ones are other than the dumb ones; the deaf are the ignorant followers who go along with their leaders and that does not leave them with an ear with which they would hear the call of truth; and dumb are the leaders who very well know the correctness of the call to monotheism and negation of polytheism, but they, because of their enmity and transgression, are dumb—their tongues do not move to acknowledge the word of truth or to testify for it. Both groups together are partners in the fact that they both fall in the darkness in which the truth is not seen, nor can a third person show them anything by pointing (out the truth) because they happen to be in utter darkness where pointing (out the truth) is useless.

This idea is supported by the fact that the speech contained in the verses covers both groups as pointed by the Divine Word in the preceding verses: *And they prohibit* (*others*) *from it and go far away from it...* (6:26); and likewise: *but most of them do not know* (6:37). This concerns the verse under

discussion.

As for the verse of the hypocrites, deaf, dumb, blind, the idea is to show that all these attributes are gathered in them at the same time because they are cut off from the mercy of God from all sides. And as for the verse of disbelievers: *Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes*, the idea behind it is to show that setting a seal upon hearing is separate from setting a seal upon their hearts; as God has quoted them in His Book: *And they say: "Our hearts are under coverings from that to which you call us, and there is a heaviness in our ears, and a veil hangs between us and you...* (41:5). Sometimes the verse is interpreted in different ways.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ بَلْ إِيَّاهُ تَدْعُونَ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

(6:40–41) Say: "Tell me if the chastisement of Allah should overtake you or the hour should come upon you, will you call (on others) besides Allah, if you are truthful? Nay! Him you call upon, so He clears away that for which you pray if He pleases and you forget what you set up (with Him)."

The word, *ara'aytakum* (tell me), with *hamzah* of question, and the form of singular masculine past tense from *al-ru'yah* (to see), followed by second person plural pronoun—is taken by the people of literature in the meaning of: "Tell me." al-Rāghib says in al-Mufradāt: "*Ara'ayta* runs like, tell me; *kāf* is added to it and *ta* is left unchanged in dual, plural and in feminine forms; changes occur on *kāf*, not *ta*; God says: *'Tell me, is this he whom...'* (17:62); *Say: 'Tell me if the chastisement of Allah...'* (6:40)."

This verse in a way renews the argumentation against polytheists, and establishes a proof of invalidity of their polytheism. The argument supposes a premise of a punishment coming from God or coming of the Hour to them, and then it supposes that they will call one who would remove that punishment from them—as has been endowed in the nature of humans, when faced with the hardship, to seek help from one who has power to relieve him of it. Then, (O Prophet!) You should ask them: Who is the one whom you would call upon and whom you would approach with your plea,

if you are truthful? Would you call besides God your idols and images whom you have given the names of deities yourselves or would you call Him? Far be it that you would call other than God while you observe that they are governed by creative orders like yourselves, and your calling them would not benefit you at all.

But rather you would forget those partners whom you have named deities; because when calamities surround a man and tremors shake him, then he forgets everything except his own self. However, there is in his soul a hope that the calamity will be removed from him, and the one whom he hopes to remove it is his Lord; so you forget your partners and call upon Him Who will remove it (besides them) and He is God, Great is His name. So, it is God Who removes what you pray for its removal, if He wishes to remove it, and He is not bound to accept the prayer nor is He compelled, rather He has power over everything in all situations.

Now, when God, Glory be to Him, is the powerful Lord Whom man never forgets, even when he forgets everything except his own self,and he is compelled to approach Him, by his natural urge whenever hefaces back-breaking hardship, forgetting other partners whom they call gods, then He alone is the Lord of the people, and not the idols.

So, the verse's meaning is as follows: *Say:* O Muḥammad! *Tell me*, that is, inform me *if the chastisement of Allah should overtake you orthe Hour should come upon you,* in case of coming of the divine chastisement (and the disbelievers do not deny it), and in case of coming of the Hour (and it does not matter if they deny it because it will come), *will you* then *call* (on others) *besides Allah* for its removal and God has quoted in His speech their plea for removal of chastisement in this world and on the Day of Resurrection all together because it is part of human nature, *if you are truthful?* And deal with justice. *Nay, Him* i.e. God and not other than Him of your idols, *you call upon, so He clears away that for which you pray*, of the chastisement, *if He pleases* to clear it as He did for the people of Jonah (Yūnus); and He is not compelled or bound to accept the prayer because of His personal power, *and you forget what you set up* (with Him), from among idols and images; apart from what is ingrained in the human nature that when tragedies overwhelm him he remains focused with his own self forgetting everything, and he does not think except of his own self because there is not enough space to be involved in what does not benefit him. Thus, his involvement, in this situation, in praying to God and forgetting the idols is clearest proof that

He, the Sublime, is the God, there is none to be worshiped other than Him, and there is none to be adored except Him.

It is clear from the above discourse that:

First: Coming of chastisement or of the Hour, and likewise the prayer to remove it are suppositions in the proof of the verse. The idea is to describe that He Who is then called upon is God alone, and not the idols. The prayer itself during hardship and afflictions, and the fact that man by nature approaches Him, Who clears the difficulties when hope of all other helps is cut off, is another proof separate from this one. The aim of this proof mentioned in this verse is monotheism, and that of the other proof is to prove that there is a Maker, without looking at His Unity, although both ideas are concomitants.

Second: The clause, "so he clears away that for which you pray", is qualified with "if He pleases", intends to show the absolute power: The Almighty God has the power to clear away all hardships even the Hour in which there is no doubt. So, although His definite decision for any affair makes it certain to appear, yet it does not nullify His power to leave it; He has unfettered power to do what He has decided upon and what He has not decided; and similar to issue of the Hour, in this respect, is every unforgiven punishment and every definite affair. If He pleases He shall bring it about, and if He does not please He shall not bring it, although He always is pleased with what He has definitely decided and has firmly promised, and God does not break His promise. So understand it.

Thus, He, the Sublime, has power not to respond to the prayer of any one who prays; even though He has mentioned Himself that He is the Responder. He says: *And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me,* (2:186); and He has given definite promise to respond to His suppliant, and has said: *Call upon Me, I will answer you...* (40:60). It is so because the promise of responding does not deprive Him of the power of not responding, although He always answers the prayer of every one who prays to Him with real prayer; and His custom flows on it—a straight path, in which there is no going back.

From all this appears the incorrectness of the objection raised about this verse that its theme goes against the declarations of the Book and sunnah—the Hour is bound to happen and it will definitely happen, and there is no turning back to the punishment of extermination; as God says: *...and*

the call of the unbelievers is only in error, (40:50).

The basis of its incorrectness is that the verse does not show more than the fact that God does whatever He wishes and He has power over every thing. But whether He actually does wish everything and actually does do everything, the verse does not prove it at all; and there is no doubt that His final decision to bring about the Hour, or to mete to a nation the punishment of termination, does not nullify His power to do its opposite. So, He has power to go against it if He wishes so, although He does not go against the promise and does not break what He wills.

As for the Divine Word: *and the call of the unbelievers is only in error,* it refers to their prayer in the Hell for removal of its punishment, and easing it from them.[1] It is obvious that such a prayer, with the firm ruling and final judgement, loses its reality since asking that God may not resurrect people or He may not punish the inhabitants of Hell is like asking Him not to be the Almighty God for one of the demands of divinity is that people return back to Him according to their deeds. Such prayers only have the appearance of prayer but are devoid of its true meaning.

If the prayer materializes in its real form in the sense that the person pleas truly and sincerely addressing the prayer to God, such a prayer is indeed not rejected as is obvious from His statement: *...I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me...* (2:186); and a prayer in such a form does not leave an unbeliever as an unbeliever, at the least when he does such a prayer, as the Almighty has said: *So when they ride in the ships, they call upon Allah, being sincerely obedient to Him, but when He brings them safe to the land, lo! They associate others* (with Him), (29:65).

And so His statement that: *...and the call of the unbelievers is only in error,* (40:50), refers to their plea while they were unbelievers; and it is known that the characteristic of disbelief will not separate from them in the abode of recompense (that is, in the Hereafter) even though itis possible that it may separate from them in the abode of action (that is, in this world) by repentance and belief.

So, the unbelievers' prayer to relieve them of the chastisement on the

1 The respected translator, al-ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Saʾīd al-Akhtar al-Raḍawī, stopped his pen here on the morning of 20th June 2002, and soon after that he suffered a massive stroke and breathed his last on that Thursday night. May Almighty God elevate his status and bless his soul. *Amen!* His son, Sayyid Muhammad Akhtār Rizvī took over from here and completed this volume. (Ed.)

Day of Resurrection or in the Hell is like their lie against God on the Day of Resurrection when they say: *By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists,* (6:23). No lie will be of any use on that day but since they were used to it in the world and its vice had taken roots in their characters, its effect will manifest on the day when the hidden secrets will come out. Similarly, their food, drink and mutual arguments in the Hell (are manifestations of their character); *they will have no escape from any of it as the Almighty has said: (They) shall be made to drink from a boiling spring. They shall have no food but of thorns, which will neither fatten nor avail against hunger,* (88:5–7). *Then shall you, O you who err and call it a lie! Most surely eat of a tree of zaqqūm and fill* (*your*) *bellies with it; then drink over it of boiling water; and drink as drinks the thirsty camel,* (56:51–55). *That most surely is the truth: the contending one with another of the Inmates of the Fire,* (38:64). These are all examples of the manifestation of their inner character (in the Hereafter).

The previous verse supports what we have said above that the unbelievers' prayer was not based on reality. (This is also confirmed by) the Almighty's statement: *And those who are in the Fire shall say to the keepers of Hell: "Call upon your Lord that He may lighten to us one day of the punishment." They shall say: "Did not your messengers come to you with clear arguments?" They shall say: "Yea." They shall say: "Then call." And the call of the unbelievers is only in error*, (40:49–50). Indeed, their plea to the wardens of the Hell to ask God on their behalf to lessen the chastisement is an indication that they had no hope in acceptance of their prayer for themselves; and a prayer without any hope of acceptance is not a true prayer and invocation since a prayer cannot be linked to something that is not going to happen at all.

Third: The real meaning of forgetfulness in His statement: "and you forget what you set up (with Him)" is seen in the human conditionwhen he is engulfed with difficulties and mishaps since he focuses on himself and forgets everything else except the Glorified God.

And so there is no need to pay heed to what some (commentators) have said that the meaning of "and you forget what you set up (with Him)", means they turn away from the idols like one who has forgotten them. (There is no need to heed to this interpretation) even though it is plausible since it is a common figurative usage of the term 'forgetfulness' and the Qur'an has used 'forgetfulness' in the meaningof turning away from something and not being overtly attentive to it just as He has said: *And today, it will be announced: We shall forget you just as you forgot the meeting of this*

day of yours... (45:34), and other similar verses.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(6:42) And certainly We sent (messengers) to nations before you, then We seized them with distress and affliction in order that they might humble themselves.

al-Ba'sā', al-ba's and *al-bu's* means distress and misery; however, *al-bu's* is mostly used for war and the like, while *al-ba's* and *al-ba'sā'* is used for other situations like poverty, drought, famine, etc. *al-Ḍurr* and *al-ḍarrā'* refer to a negative psychological condition such as sadness and ignorance or a negative physical condition such as sickness and loss of limb or some other negative condition such as loss of prestige or wealth. Probably the purpose of combining *al-ba'sā'* and *al-ḍarr'* as to prove the materialization of difficulties in the real world like drought, flood and earthquake, and its resulting negative consequences for men such as fear, poverty and shabby condition. And *al-ḍarā'ah* means depravity and *al-taḍarru'* means self-abasement and it refers to humility expressed towards Almighty God so that He may relieve them of what has befallen upon them from the afflictions of difficulty and calamity.

In this verse and four verses that follow it, Almighty God describes to His Prophet the norm that He uses in dealing with the nations that came before him among whom the messengers came with clear signs. He used to send them, the messengers who would remind them of God's unity and (guide them to) humility and sincerity in returning towards Him; then He would afflict them with a variety of difficulties and misfortune, and seize them with distress and misery only to the extent that it would not force them to implore and not compel them to pray humbly and appease; hopefully they may pray to Him with their own right choice and their hearts may become soft so that they may turn away from satanic temptations and reliance on material causes. But they did not turn in humility towards Him, rather indulgence in worldly matters turned their hearts hard, and the Satan made their evil deeds seem fair to them and made them forget the remembrance of God.

When they forgot the remembrance of God, Glory be to Him, He opened for them the doors of all things and bestowed upon them variety of

blessings until they were pleased with what they had of the blessings, and became proud and considered themselves to be entirely self-reliant without God. Thus, God seized them all of a sudden and in a way that they were not aware of it, when they were hopeless of salvation, witnessing the decline of what was with them of the means. *So the roots of the people who were unjust were cut off; and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,* (6:45).

This (Divine) norm (of dealing with nations) is known as *al-istidrāj* (letting the evil doers feel secure with themselves and gradually leading them closer to severe punishment) and disguise which God has summarized in His Word: *And* (*as to*) *those who reject Our Communications, We draw them near* (to destruction) *by degrees from whence they know not; and I grant them respite; surely My scheme is effective,* (7:182–3).

By contemplating on the explanation of the above-mentioned verse and reflecting on its context, it becomes clear that the verse does not contradict the other verses that say that the human being is naturally disposed to belief in One God based on the demands of his nature and instinct of accepting and heeding to God at the time when he loses hope in the causes of nature as He has said: *And when a wave like mountains covers them, they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, but when He brings them safe to the land, some of them follow the middle course; and none denies Our signs but every perfidious, ungrateful one,* (31:32).

This is so because the words *al-ba'sā'* and *al-ḍarrā'* in the verse under discussion refers to distress and affliction only to the extent of being distracted from all causes of nature and forget all normal causes; and the proof for this interpretation is His Word: "in order that they might humble themselves", the term "might" is a word of hope, and there can be no hope in case of force and coercion. Similarly, the Word: *and the Satan made what they did fair-seeming to them* (6:43), prove the same since its apparent meaning is that they were deceived by their evil deeds and sought relief from the distress and affliction through their own actions that they had done and managed by their hands to seek control over the obstacles of life and whatever stands against their way of life. So, they were occupied with the natural causes which kept them away from showing humility towards God and relying upon Him; just as He said: *Then when their messengers came to them with clear arguments, they exulted in what they had with them of knowledge, and there beset them that which theyused to mock. But when they saw Our punishment, they said: "We believe in Allah alone and we deny what used to associate with Him."*

(40:83–84). So, the first verse (of these two verses), as you see, talks about them in the same way as the verse which is under discussion: it talks about abstaining from expressing humility (towards God) and being deceived by their evil deeds. And the second verse talks about the same subject that was discussed in other verses about monotheism in state of distress.

This disproves what one commentator has said that the verse says that the past nations were averse to monotheism and avoided humility (to God) even in hardships that compels (one to turn to seek in distress). He says: "The Almighty God has sworn to His Messenger that He has indeed sent messengers before him to nations before his community, and that they were more stronger than his community in polytheism and more severe in insisting on injustice while his community used to plea to God alone at times of severe hardship and used to forget the masters and partners (of God) that they had adopted. As for the previous nations, the afflictions did not soften their hearts and did not reform the corruption that Satan had brought about in their nature."

The implication of this interpretation is that monotheism is not a natural phenomenon which manifests when overwhelming whims disappear and natural causes evaporate or it could even negate the basis of nature (for monotheism) all together. Whereas the Almighty has indeed said: *Then set your face upright for religion in natural devotion* (to truth) *the nature made by Allah in which He has made men...* (30:30). So, He has thereby explained that the religion of monotheism is based on nature; and that the nature does not accept any change by a changing element. This is supported by other verses which affirm that when a human being loses hope in material causes, he indeed focuses his attention to his Lord by praying to Him with sincerity in faith. Moreover, acknowledging the One God at time of distress and after disillusion (from all material causes) is a fact found within us as a natural instinct and there is no difference in this matter between the past and present man in anyway.

فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَٰكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(6:43) Yet why did they not, when Our punishment came to them, humble themselves? But their hearts hardened and the Satan made what they did fair-seeming to them:

"Yet why did they not," is used for exclusivity or for negation; in any case, its context conveys the meaning of negation by the virtue of His Word: "But their hearts hardened." Hardening of the heart is opposite of its becoming soft, and it means that the person is no more influenced by witnessing a scene or listening to a statement that normally impacts upon a human.

The meaning of the verse is that they neither humbled themselves when punishment came upon them nor turned to their Lord to express humility; instead their hearts refused to be influenced by it, and they were engaged with their satanic deeds which prevented them from remembering God; they focused on the natural causes that they considered sufficient for improving their situation.

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

(6:44) But when they neglected that with which they had been admonished, We opened for them the doors of all things, until when they rejoiced in what they were given We seized them suddenly; then lo! They were in utter despair.

"We opened for them the doors of all things," means giving them all blessings from the worldly riches for which people compete in order to enjoy the preferred life such as wealth, children, physical health, comfort, abundance, security, prestige and power—all this is given in abundance without any restrain or prohibition. This is unlike the situation when a person is given from the treasure of goods with a measure and a limit, then its door is open and he is just given accordingly and therefore it is closed. But when the intent is to give without any restrain, then its door is opened and is not closed at all. The sentence, as seen by its context, conveys the meaning of giving them variety of blessings without any measure.

This is the meaning even though the concept of "opening the door" would be naturally more appropriate for good deeds and blessings whereas evil deeds and misfortunes are entitled to deprival and so "closing of the door" would be more appropriate in that case as can be alluded from His Word: *Whatever Allah grants to men of* (*His*) *mercy, there is none to withhold it, and what He withholds there is none to send it forth after that...* (35:2).

(The verse under discussion ends with the sentence: "then lo! They were

in utter despair.") And the term *mublisūn* (those were in utter despair) is from *ablasa* and *iblāsan*. al-Rāghib said:

> "*al-Iblās* means the sadness that manifests out of extreme hopelessness... Since the one in utter despair often adopts silence and forgets what is in his mind, it is said: 'So-and-so was in utter despair (*ablasa*),' when he is silent and his argument has been exhausted." Based on this, the appropriate meaning of His Word: "then lo! They were in utter despair," would be as follows: 'then lo! They were quite, having exhausted the argument.' "

The meaning of the verse would be that when they forgot what they were reminded of or turned away from it, We gave to them every kind of blessing to allure them until when the blessings were completedfor them and they became happy with what was given to them, We seized them all of a sudden and smothered their souls—and they didn'thave any argument in their support—since they deserved it.

فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۚ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(6:45) So the roots of the people who were unjust were cut off; and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

(*Dābir al-qawm* (the roots of the people) is from *dubr al-shay* (the back of something)). The *dubr/dubur* of something is opposite of its *qubl/qubul* and both are the rear and front parts of a thing and therefore they are also used to describe the two private organs. Sometimes their usage is expanded and applied to describe the first part or the last part of a thing, separate from its main body. This in turn has brought forth relevant verbs from these two words such as *aqbal* (to move forward), *adbara* (to move backward), *qabbala* (to kiss), *dabbara* (to manage) *taqabbala* (to accept), *tadabbara* (to reflect), *istaqbala* (to receive or welcome) and *istadbara* (to turn one's back).

And from this derivation comes the term *dābir* (the end, the root) in the meaning of what happens at the end of a thing and follows it; for example, it is said *ams al-dābi* (tomorrow that follows), *'ām qābil* (the year that comes). The word *dābir* in this meaning is used for what is left behind like *dābir al-insān* referring to one's descendants and other legacies. So, the Almighty's Word: "So the roots of the people who were unjust were cut off," means that total destruction covered them in a way that no trace, whatsoever, of them was left or that they were all destroyed and no one was spared as He

has said: *Do you then see of them one remaining?* (69:8).

Verbalizing the noun (that is, the roots of the people.. . were cut off) in place of the pronoun (that is, they were cut off) was done to highlight the basis of the judgement and that was injustice which ruined them all and cut of their roots. This also paves the way for God's following statement: "and all praise is due to God, the Lord of the worlds!"

The description in this verse of their characteristic of injustice and the Almighty's praise for His Lordship proves that the blame and the calamity of what came upon them in form of devastating punishment stems from themselves since they were the people who committed injustice, and that nothing can be attributable to the Almighty except the good praise since He did not do anything in handling their affair except based on the demands of profound wisdom. Nothing led them to the path of their eventual end except what they themselves liked by their wrong choice, and it was proven that disgrace and evil is for the unbelievers, and truly all praise is due to God, the Lord of the worlds.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ ۗ انْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(6:46) Say: "Have you considered that if Allah takes away your hearing and your sight and sets a seal on your hearts, who is the god besides Allah that can bring it to you?" See how We repeat the communications, yet they turn away.

Taking away the hearing and the sight means taking away the power of the ears and the eyes, making someone deaf and blind. Setting a seal on the hearts means closing its 'door' in such a way that nothing from outside can enter so that one can reflect upon its affair and distinguish the obligatory deeds from non-obligatory ones or the good and beneficial ones from the evil and harmful ones—in spite of retaining its original characteristic and that is the ability of understanding; otherwise, he will become a lunatic and insane.

Since these polytheists were not giving ear to the true words about God, Glory be to Him, and were not seeing His signs that prove that He is One Who has no partner, hence their hearts become such that nothing from the imports of ears and eyes could enter them so that they may distinguish

truth from the falsehood. This is an argument to invalidate the belief of the polytheists regarding God, the Sublime and His Unity.

This argument can be summarized as follows: the belief in partners of God carries within itself its falsity. The belief in partners of God is based on believing in them as intercessors in the sense that they intercede and mediate (between humans and God) to procure benefits and avert harms. If the partners are just intercessors based on this supposition, then God (being the Supreme God) has the ability to do whatever He wants in His Kingdom without anyone preventing or opposing Him. So, if God takes away the power of your hearing and sight, and seals your hearts, He can do that, and no one from the partners ascribed to Him can oppose Him since they are intercessors and intermediaries only, not opponents (of God). So, if God does so and deprives you of what He takes away from you, then no one can give that back to you because the partners (believed by you) are intercessors and intermediaries only, not the source of creation and invention.

If those partners cannot give you any benefit or avert any harm, then what does it mean to ascribe divinity to them? After all, God is none but One Who can create, destroy and do whatever He likes in the universe. Human nature is compelled to acknowledge that this world has a God by searching for the origin of the occurrences of the good and the evil that it witnesses in the existing world. If something neither harms nor benefits, alongside the occurrences (of the world), then calling it 'God' is nothing but a nonsensical statement.

It does not behove a man with sound mind and discerning ability to accept an image of stone or a wood or a metal (carved by human hands based on his own ideas) as the creator of the world or having ability to create and destroy. Neither can he accept the notion that a god of a species (that is, an idol) is the God worthy of being worshiped who originated the world without a prior model while he himself is a servant of God nurtured by Him.

This argument can also be presented in a different way: the concept of divinity cannot be applied to a partner of God who is merely an intercessor and an intermediary since being original in creation and invention (which is an essential quality of God) demands freedom in whatever He wants to do and deserves expression of humility from the created and sustained beings. Now, if the supposed intermediary of God has freedom in whatever he wants to do, and then he will be the origin and beginning point of creation and not an intermediary and intercessor. But if he has no freedom in whatever

he wants to, then he is just an instrument and a tool, and not an originator and God—this also applies to the material phenomenon wherever they are found since they are nothing more than a tool and an instrument such as eating fulfils the appetite, drinking quenches the thirst, parents bring forth a child, pen creates the images of writing, walking covers the distance, etc.

See how We repeat the communications, yet they turn away: *al-Taṣrīf* (repeating) means changing them (in different forms) in order to explain them (more easily); and *al-Ṣudūf* (turn away) means ignoring or discarding. The terms *ṣadafa, yaṣdafu, ṣadufan,* are used when a person turns away from something.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

(6:47) Say: "Have you considered if the chastisement of Allah should overtake you suddenly or openly, will any be destroyed but the unjust people?"

al-Jahrah (openly) means a full exposure (of something) that leaves no room for doubt and therefore it has been used here as a contrast to *al-baghtah* (suddenly) which means coming of something suddenly in a way that it does not appear upon whom it ascends except after it has come and engulfed him, leaving him no chance of escape.

This verse is a general argument stating that the unjust people are in danger of God's chastisement, a chastisement that will neither miss them nor mistake its intended target; then it clarifies that they are classified as 'unjust' because they deviated from the Islamic call and rejected the communications of God, the Sublime. This is so because chastisement actually means conveying the guilty to what harms and destroys him as a recompense of his crime, and there is no crime without injustice. So, if a chastisement comes to them from God, Glory be to Him, it will not destroy anyone but the unjust. This is the meaning of this verse, and the next two verses specify that unbelievers are the unjust ones.

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ ۖ فَمَنْ آمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ

بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

(6:48–49) And We send not messengers but as announcers of good news and givers of warning; then whoever believes and acts aright, they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. And (as for) those who reject Our communications, chastisement shall afflict them because they transgressed:

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These verses state that the unbelievers are the unjust ones and that when God's chastisement comes to them, it harms them only because of their injustice. And that is why God changes the thread of the conversation by addressing the Holy Prophet directly so that he will be the one who informs them about the chastisement and so that it would be more decisive in cutting off the excuse. The first person pronoun has been used to emphasize that this statement comes from the divine arena of glory and greatness.

The summary of this section is that the Almighty has commanded His Prophet to present the argument to the unbelievers that if God's chastisement comes to them, it will not destroy anyone but the unjust ones among them. Then He says to His Messenger: We are giving you the argument about coming chastisement; We are informing you that Our plan to send the Messengers is for the purpose of giving good tidings and warning: so whoever believes and does good, there will be no (chastisement) upon him but one, whoever rejects Our verses, he will be touched by Our chastisement because of his deviation and straying away from the path of submission. Therefore, they should reflect about themselves to see among which of the two groups they belong to.

In previous discourses, we have fully explained the meaning of belief (*īmān*), doing good (*iṣlāḥ*), and deviation and sins (*fisq*), and also the meaning of negating fear and sadness from the believers.

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ
إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ۖ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۚ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۚ
أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(6:50) Say: "I do not say to you, I have with me the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel; I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me." Say:

"Are the blind and the seeing one alike? Do you not then reflect?"

Perhaps the meaning of "the treasures of God" is ("the treasuresof mercy") as He has mentioned: *Say: "If you control the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then you would withhold* (them) *from fear of spending..."* (17:100). The impact of the "treasures of mercy" has been disclosed in His Word: *Whatever Allah grants to men of* (His) *mercy, there is none to withhold it...* (35:2). So, the mercy of God exists in abundance in the sense that it emanates from Him upon things bestowing them their existence and the effects of their existence. Thus, He, the Sublime, has clarified this by His Word: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, 'Be,' and it is,* (36:82). The source of this abundant mercy is His Word: "Be" which emanates from the divine arena of glory and greatness. This is also reflected by what He has said in another verse: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure,* (15:21).

So, the meaning of "the treasures of God" is the station from which He bestows from it whatever He wishes without anything diminishing (in the treasures) by bestowing of neither existence nor anything making Him incapable by weakness or greatness (of task). This is reserved for God, Glory be to Him; whereas anyone else, whatever and whoever he may be, is limited and whatever is with him is fixed so that when he gives something from it, it will diminish to that extent; and a person with such limitations cannot make a poor free from need or fulfil the request of a petitioner or answer the plea of a supplicant.

As His Word: "nor do I know the unseen" (uttered by the Holy Prophet) refers to the knowledge of the unseen which is independent of Divine revelation. Whereas his knowledge (of the unseen) based on revelation is confirmed in the following sentence in this same verse: "I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me." So, He has clarified in various place that some of the revelation sent to the messengers consist of the knowledge of the unseen as seen in the following verses: *The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses of an apostle...* (72:26–27); and His Word in the story of Joseph: *This is of the tidings of the unseen* (*which*) *We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans,* (12:102); and His Word in the story of Mary: *This is of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to you; and you were not with them when they cast their pens* (*to decide*) *which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you were not with them when they contended one*

with another, (3:44); and His Word after the story of Noah: *These are of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to you, you did not know them*—(neither) *you nor your people—before this...* (11:49).

So, the purpose of denying the knowledge of the unseen refers to denial of the state in which he is naturally equipped in his existence with an ability that does not conceal for him things that humans cannot normally know from the secret matters whatever it may be.

As for His Word: "nor do I say to you that I am an angel" intend to deny the angelic nature (of the Holy Prophet) since the angels are devoid of the needs of physical life such as food, drink, marriage and its attachments. This has been mentioned in other places also such as: *Say: "I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me..."* (18:110). The sentence under discussion here consisting of denial of the angelic nature (of the Holy Prophet) without proving his humanity is in response to the unbelievers' bewilderment about the Holy Prophet in their saying like: "*What sort of Apostle is this that he eats food and goes about in the marts...?*" (25:7).

It appears that this verse (that contains denial after denial) is a response to what the unbelievers were suggesting to the Holy Prophet in demanding miraculous signs and objecting to his activities which were similar to those of normal humans as can beseen in their statement quoted by the Almighty: *And they say:" What sort of Apostle is this that he eats food and goes about in the marts; why has not an angel been sent down to him, so that he should have been a warner with him?" Or,* (Why is not) *a treasure be thrown down to him, or he should have a garden from which he may eat?*" (25:7–8). Similarly: *And they say: "We will by no means believe in youuntil you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us. Or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, gushing out. Or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face* (*with us*). *Or you should have a house of gold, or you should ascend into heaven, and we will never believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read." Say: "Glory be to my Lord; am I aught but a human messenger?*" (17:90–93); *...Still they will shake their heads at you and say: "When will it be?*" (17:51); *They ask you about the hour, when will be it taking place?* (7:187).

So, the meaning of this verse: "Say: 'I do not say to you...'" is that in my call to you and in conveying the message to you, I have not claimed anything more than what I am—a mortal human being—so why are you blaming me

and forcing me to accept your suggestions? I didn't claim that I have the divine treasures so that you may demand of me to bring forth rivers or create gardens or a house made of ornaments! I didn't claim that I know the unseen so that I may answer to you everything that is hidden under the veils of unseen such as the time of the Hour! I didn't claim that I am an angel so that you may defame me and reject my statements by my eating food and walking in the market to buy things!

The Sublime's Word: "'I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me,'" clarifies the truth of the Holy Prophet's claim after rejecting what they had expected from his claim of messengership of God to them. So, the claim that "I am the Messenger of God to you" does not mean that 'I have with me the treasures of God, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel; rather the reality is that God reveals unto me whatever He wants to reveal.'

This statement is not presented in form of a claim; rather it says: 'I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me' in order to prove that he is commanded to convey what is revealed unto him; in other words, conveying the revelation means following it. It is as if when he said: 'I do not say this or that,' it was asked: 'If this is the case and you are a human like us and weak like one of us without any superiority over us, then what do you want from us?' And so he responds: 'I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me: to give you good tidings (if you follow) and warn you (of chastisement if you disobey), and to call you to the religion of monotheism.'

The proof of this explanation is in the next sentence of the verse: *Say:* "*Are the blind and the seeing one alike? Do you not then reflect?*" The context of this sentence explains to us the following: 'Even though I am same as you in humanity and dependency, that does not prevent me from calling you to follow me since my Lord has blessed me with the insight by means of what He reveals to me and not to you; and so you and me are like the blind and the seeing who are not alike in this matter even if they are same in humanity.' Reflection in this difference between the two guides a person to the conclusion that the blind must follow the seeing and the ignorant must follow the learned.

وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَلِيٌّ
وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

(6:51) And warn with it those who fear that they shall be gathered to their Lord—there is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him—that they may guard (against evil):

The pronoun "with it" in "warn with it those" refers to the Qur'an as seen in the previous sentence: "*I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me.*" And the statement: "there is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him" indicates their circumstances which are the outcome of their fear or they being gathered on the Day of Resurrection.

"Fear" here refers to its common meaning and not to knowledge or realization since there is no such indication in the context. And the command to especially warn those who fear that they will be gathered to their Lord on the judgement day does not negate the general warning covering them and others as indicated in an earlier verse: "*... and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches...*" (6:19). Since 'the fear of being gathered to their Lord' helps their souls in accepting (the message) and bringstheir minds closer to the call, the command of warning has beenspecified for them; and they have been described in this way in order to emphasize the call for them and to urge the Holy Prophet that he should not neglect their issue and not consider them like others, instead he should pay more attention in the call to them because their position (based on the fear) is closer to the truth and there is hope in their belief. So, this verse, along with other verses related to thegeneral warning, conveys the following meaning: Warn the people in general and especially those who fear of being gathered to their Lord.

And His Word: "there is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him" is total negation of the power of other than God as wellas the authority of intercession. However, the general import of this verse is qualified by other verses such as: *...who is he that can intercede with Him but by His Permission?* (2:255); *...and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves...* (21:28); *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession but he who bears witness of the truth and they know,* (43:86).

This specific verse, however, has not been qualified because it addresses the idolaters who believed in the power of the idols and their intercession, and they didn't believe that their power was dependent upon the permission or approval of God. Whereas the belief in the power and the intercession based on God's permission, depends on its knowledge and that knowledge depends on revelation and prophethood, but they did not believe in

prophethood. On the contrary, the power and the intercession that they ascribed to their idols was believed by them to be part of their essential nature which did not depend on God's permission; as if they were powerful in their existence which had the inherit ability to do whatever they wished regarding the weak ones without any permission from God, Glory be to Him! In other words, creation of powerful beings inherently carries the 'Authorization' to exercise power over those who are under them.

In short, the verse says: "there is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him," and does not include 'except by His permission' because the idolaters indeed believed that the idols were absolute guardians and intercessors—so the unconditional rejection of any guardian and intercessor besides God stands parallel to their belief of affirming (guardianship and intercession) for them. As for adding the exception to this general statement, although it is conceptually valid (as it has occurred in various places in His Speech), it is not appropriate in this place.

So, it is clear from the above discussion that the verse, in its unconditional form, commands (the Holy Prophet) to warn everyone who has the fear in his heart of being gathered to Lord when they are reminded of God's verses, no matter whether he is from those who believe in being gathered (like the believers from among the People of the Book) or from those who don't believe in it (like the idolaters and others) who doubt its occurrence but its fear engulfs their souls with its possibility—for the fear of something whose occurrence is possible can indeed materialize even if one is not sure about it.

There is a difference in opinion among the commentators about this verse: One says that the verse was revealed regarding the believers in being gathered and those are the ones addressed in the following verse: *And do not drive away those who call their Lord in the morning and the evening...* Another says that it was revealed regarding a group of polytheists' idolaters who believed in being resurrected after death. This is so even though there is no proof that any of the Meccans or Arab polytheists of the era of revelation held this view and in spite of the fact that verses of this chapter address the polytheists of Quraysh or Arab! Yet another commentator says that it is addressed to everyone who believes in being gathered in the hereafter no matter whether he is a Muslim or from the People of the Book, and that the command of warning is related to the believers in specific (even though the obligation of warning is for all people) because the argument is more compelling upon them since they confess to the resurrection.

This verse, however, has only described them in context of the fear of being gathered; and the fear of a thing does not depend on absolute knowledge of its occurrence or on belief in its occurrence, rather it depends on doubt (that is, the probability of equal proportions with varying degrees of preference) just like fear that is based on knowledge. This is obvious.

So, the verse, indeed, urges the Holy Prophet to warn anyone in whom he finds the signs of fear, from whatever group he may be, because the foundation of the religious call is based on being gathered to the Lord and being held accountable for the bad and good deeds, and be recompensed accordingly. And the minimum impact of the religious call would be on a person who considers the gathering (of judgement day) a possibility and so fears it; and the higher the possibility of its occurrence, the higher would be the level of fear and stronger the impact (of accepting) the call—until he acquires conviction about it and totally negates it opposite, and thereafter emerges the total acceptance.

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۖ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

(6:52) And do not drive away those who call their Lord in the morning and the evening, they desire only His favour; neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answer- able for any reckoning of yours, so that you should drive them away and thus be of the unjust:

The context of this verse is that the polytheists from the Holy Prophet's tribe proposed to him that he should push away the (socially) weak believers and so, God, Glory be to Him, forbade him from it in this verse. This is supported by the next verse: *And thus do We try some of them by others...*

This proposal of theirs is similar to what was proposed by the aristocrats of the past nations to their prophets that they should push away from themselves the weak and poor believers out of arrogance and haughtiness. While describing the people of Noah and his arguments, God, the Sublime, narrates the proposal of his people similar to the verses under discussion: *And the chiefs of those who disbelieved from among his people said: "We do not consider you but a mortal like ourselves and we do not see any have followed you*

but those who are the meanest of us at first thought and we do not see in you anyexcellence over us; nay, we deem you liars." He said: "O my people! Tell me if I have with me clear proof from my Lord, and He has granted me mercy from Himself and it has been made obscure to you; shall we constrain you to (*accept*) *it while you are averse from it... I am not going to drive away those who believe; surely they shall meet their Lord... and I do not say to you that I have treasures of Allah; and I do not know the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel; nor do I say about those whom your eyes hold in mean estimation* (*that*) *Allah will never grant them* (*any*) *good—Allah knows best what is in their souls—for then most surely I should be of the unjust."* (11:27–31).

Comparing these verses with the verse under discussion shows that those who call their Lord in the morning and the evening and desire His favor are the believers; and their call in the morning and the evening—and that is their ritual prayer or their general plea to their Lord—has been mentioned as a proof of their unadulterated link to their Lord, and as a way of explaining the statement in the next verse: *Does not Allah best know the grateful?*

The word *wajh* (pl. *wujūh*) in "they desire only His *wajh*" means God's face. (It has been translated here as "His *favour*.") al-Rāghib in his Mufradāt says:

> "The *wajh* in reality is a bodily part as He says: *And wash your faces* (wujūh) *and hands,* (5:6). *And the fire shall cover their faces,* (13:50). And since the *wajh* is the first part that faces you and the most noble part of the visible body, it is used to describe the front, the most noble and the first part of everything; and therefore it is said: '*wajh* of so-and-so' and '*wajh* of the day' (in the meaning of beginning of the day).
>
> "Sometimes it is used to indicate the person himself as it can be seen in the Divine Word: (Everyone on it must perish) *but the face of your Lord* (the Master of glory and honour) *will endure forever* (55:26–27). It is said that 'the face' means His Person; it is also said that it means paying attention to God through good deeds.
>
> "He has said: *Wherever you turn there shall be Allah's face* (2:115); *Everything will perish except His face* (28:88); *they desire only Allah's face* (30:38); *Verily we feed you for Allah's face* (76:9). It is said that in all these cases, the *wajh* is superfluous (and it means His Person) and so the verse means *everything will perish except Him*, andsimilarly in other examples. It has been narrated that this meaning was

> mentioned to Abū ʿAbdillāh b. al-Riḍā who responded by saying: ʿGlorified be God! They have uttered a gruesome statement. *Wajh* actually means the one who is approached in that direction and so the verse means: everything from the deeds of the people will perish (that is, be null and void) except what was done for the sake of God; and this is the meaning of other verses also.' And so the meaning of 'they desire only His *wajh*' is that they desire only God's pleasure or favor."

Comment: The transformation in usage of *wajh* from its literal meaning of a bodily part to a wider meaning of whatever one faces of a thing is no doubt a common transformation of words in their meanings. However, a serious consideration in this does not allow the word *wajh* to be used in the meaning of 'person'. So, a thing, whatever it may be, indeed faces something else with what is apparent of its qualities and names, and it's the attributes and names that are perceived by an individual (and not the person itself which is an inner reality). We come to know something through one of its attributes or its names, and then through them we reach to its person without actually perceiving its person directly.

Indeed, we gain knowledge of things first through the means of senses which perceive only the visible qualities (of shapes, lines and forms, etc.) and not their actual essence. From the result of this perception of the senses, we are lead (through the intellect) to the realization of the actual essences which are foundation of the non-essential attributes and related qualities which depend on the essences that protect them. So, when we say, "The person of Zayd," it means the person to whom the visible qualities and attributes of Zayd are referred to in the way we relate our qualities and attributes to ourselves. So, knowing the actual persons is an intellectual perception which always takes place through a kind of deduction by analogy and process of linkage.

If knowing the essential person or essence through a complete intellectual perception is not possible except by help of its attributes and effects using deduction by analogy, then the issue of (knowing) God, Glory be to Him—whose essence has no limit nor is His existence finite—is most clearly and obviously beyond our full comprehension. Perception of a thing does not occur except if it has a limit and so there can be no hope in comprehensive knowledge of the Almighty as He has said: *And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God...* (20:111); *and He knows*

what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge, (*ibid*: 110).

So, the *wajh* of a thing is what is faced by others; and its direction,that is, the point of reference, is also the *wajh* just like the face is to human when faced by others. With this consideration, the good deeds become *wajh* of God just as the evil deeds become *wajh* of the Satan.This meaning of *wajh* can be applied in verses like: *...who seek Allah's pleasure...* (30:38); "*We feed you only for the sake of Allah...*" (76:9), etc. Similarly, the attributes through which God, Glory be to Him, 'faces' the creatures (are His *wajh*) like mercy, creation, sustenance, guidance and other similar ones from the attributes of action as well as some of the attributes of His Person through which we know Him—to the extent that we can know Him—like life, knowledge and power. All these are the Almighty's *wajh* by which He 'faces' His creation and through which they turn to Him as can be seen in an implied or explicit form in the verse: *But the face of your Lord* (the master of glory and honour) *will endure forever,* (55:27). From the looks of it, the word: *the master of glory and honour* is an attribute of 'face' and not 'your Lord.' Reflect and ponder on this.

Since it is correct to say that 'the direction of Almighty God' is His *wajh*, then it is generally correct to say that whatever is linked to the Almighty in the way of proximity—like His names, attributes and religion; and like the good deeds—as well as whoever is found in the precinct of His proximity—like the prophets, angels, martyrs and all the forgiven believers—are all the Almighty's *wajh*.

This clarifies, firstly, the meaning of His Word, Glory be to Him: *... and what is with Allah is enduring...* (16:96); *and those who arewith Him are not too proud to serve Him...* (21:19); *those who arewith your Lord are not too proud to serve Him and they glorify Him...* (7:206); and His Word about one who was killed in God's way: *...nay, they are alive* (and) *are provided sustenance from their Lord.* (3:169); *And there is not a thing but with Us are its treasures...* (15:21). Along with the first verse in this paragraph, these verses prove that all these entities are everlasting by the Almighty's everlasting nature; destruction and perdition cannot touch them. He also says: *...everything is perishable but His wajh...* (28:88). This verse proves that those issues are the *wajh* of God, Glory be to Him; in other words, all those issues happen to be in the direction of the Almighty, they are comfortably established by His side and in His direction.

Secondly, the point of reference for mans intention towards His Lord is His *wajh* as He says: *...seeking the grace and pleasure from their Lord...* (5:2); *... to seek mercy from your Lord...* (17:28); *...and seek means of nearness to Him...* (5:35)—these are all *wajh* of God because the attributes of His Action such as mercy, pleasure, grace and etc. are from His *wajh*. Similarly, the 'way' of the Almighty is from His *wajh* as mentioned earlier: *...except to seek Allah's pleasure...* (2:272).

...neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours: *al-Ḥisāb* (reckoning) means using the numbers to add or subtract, etc.

Since examining the deeds and evaluating them to fulfil the recompense or to get result and etc. cannot normally be done without using numbers to add or subtract, this is known as reckoning of the deeds. If the reckoning of the deeds is to fulfil the recompense, and the recompense is indeed from God, Glory be to Him, so the reckoning is upon God, the Sublime, that is, in His jurisdiction and ability as He has said: *Their account is only with my Lord...* (26:113); *Then surely upon Us is the taking of their account* (88:26); and then He reverses the focus by saying that: *...surely Allah takes account of all things* (4:86), to prove that His, the Sublime's power and control over everything.

Based on this, the statement that 'the Prophet is neither answerable for their reckoning nor are they answerable for his reckoning' means: it is not upon him to take account of their deeds in order to recompense them so that he may drive them away from himself if he is not pleased with their behavior and dislikes their company. On the other hand, it is not upon them to take account of his deeds so that he may drive them away out of fear of scrutiny by them or their punishment or their dislike of him out of arrogance and haughtiness. Consequently, the two sentences: "neither are you answerable..." and "nor are they answerable..." are independent statements.

It could also be said that the verse: "neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs..." means that he will not carry the burden of their reckoned deeds that may be overbearing for him; and this is based on the thought that a deed becomes a burden on its doer or on one who becomes responsible for it. So, it would mean that nothing of the weight of their deeds is upon you. Consequently, the statement "nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours"—it is superfluous since the statement is complete without it—is actually just to complete the other side of the equation and emphasize the implication of the speech.

It can also be said that both sentences "neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs" and "nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours" indicate the lack of any connection between the Holy Prophet and them as far as the reckoning of deeds is concerned.

It is also said that the reckoning in this verse refers to the reckoning of the sustenance and not the deeds, and so the meaning will be: you are not answerable for reckoning of their sustenance; it is God who sustains them and upon Him is the reckoning of their sustenance. And the statement "nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours" (is superfluous and) has just come to emphasize the implication of the speech as mentioned earlier.

Although it is possible to explain the last two interpretations, but the preferred view is the first one mentioned earlier.

...so that you should drive them away and thus be of the unjust: Being included in the group of the unjust people is dependent upon driving them away that is, driving away those who call their Lord.

The sequence of the speech, in its normal form, demands that the sentence: "and thus be of the unjust" should have followed the first sentence: "And do not drive away those who call their Lord in the morning and the evening, they desire only His favor." But since the speech became prolonged because of interjection of sentences between the first and the last, the phrase: 'drive away' was repeated again as a predicate for the sentence: "and thus be of the unjust" in order to establish the connection and remove any ambiguity. So, no objection can be raised that the speech: "and thus be of the unjust" is predicated upon itself (that is, 'And do not drive away those who call their Lord so that you should drive them away') since repeating the phrase 'drive away' again has been done to link the statement: "and thus be of the unjust" to the first sentence as you already know.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِيَقُولُوا أَهَٰؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا ۗ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

(6:53) And thus do We try some of them by others so that they say: "Are these they upon whom Allah has conferred benefit from among us?" Does not Allah best know the grateful?

Fatannā (We try) is from *al-fitnah* which means test and trial. The context proves that the question: "Are these they upon whom God has

conferred benefit from among us?" is for mocking and ridiculing since it is known that the polytheists used to deride only those whom they regarded as contemptible and underrated their status in society; and this was done only because of their poverty, humbleness and low esteem in eyes of the aristocracy of Mecca.

So, God, Glory be to Him, informs His Messenger that this variance and difference (between the people) was actually a divine test by which the people are tested so that the ungrateful ones can be distinguished from the grateful ones. So, the ungrateful and arrogant people say about the poor believers: "Are these they upon whom God has conferred benefit from among us?" Verily the social norms of the people are based on the standards of nobility and baseness that they have established themselves; similarly, a deed is evaluated according to the social standing of its doer. Therefore, the norm adopted by the poor, the humble and the slave is underrated by the rich and the powerful; and so a deed accomplished by a poor or a speech uttered by a slave or a prisoner is not worth of any attention by those who own wealth and power.

So, the act of embracing the faith by the poor, the labourers, and the slaves (on the one hand), and the Prophet's consideration for them and association with them (on the other hand) by itself became kind of a proof, in the eyes of the arrogant and tyrant class of the society, of the insignificance of the faith and that it is unworthy of any attention by the notable and powerful ones.

Does not God best know the grateful?: This is a response to the polytheists' ridicule based on what they considered to be unlikely: "Are these they upon whom God has conferred benefit from among us?" It means that the believers were grateful to God and not the polytheists, and therefore He preferred the former for His favor (of Islam) and kept the latter back. The Almighty has implied that verily God best knows those who are grateful for His favor; and it is obvious that the Benefactor indeed favors and blesses one who is thankful for His blessing. And God has named confirmation of His Unity and negation of a partner from Him as gratefulness while describing the statement of Joseph: *...it beseems us not that we should associate aught with Allah; this is by Allah's grace upon usand on mankind, but most people do not give thanks,* (12:38).

The verse clarifies that the polytheists, out of their ignorance, basedhonour and power on being advanced in the vanities of this world—wealth,

children and status—while these have no value in God's eyes and no honour. The reality (of honour) revolves around the quality of gratefulness and true benefit, and that is the Divine Authority.

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۖ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

(6:54) And when those who believe in Our communications come to you, say: "Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself, (so) that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful.":

The meaning of *al-salām* (peace) has already been explained earlier. The meaning of *kataba* (writing)—mercy on Himself is that He has ordained mercy upon Himself in the sense that it is impossible to separate the description of mercy from His actions. *Aṣlaḥa* (acts aright) is from *al-iṣlāḥ* which means to be covered with goodness; grammatically it is an intransitive verb even if in reality it may be transitive. Its meaning is reforming the self or amending the deed.

Its connection to the previous verse is clear. Here God, Glory be to Him commands His Prophet—after forbidding him from driving the believers away from himself—to be kind to them, to greet them, and to give good tidings of God's forgiveness and mercy to those among them who had repented a sincere repentance for a sin, so that their souls may be delighted and the inconsistency of theirheart beats may calm down.

The verse clarifies the following:

Firstly, the verse—and it is from the verses of repentance—is related to repentance from sins and misdeeds, and not from unbelief and polytheism. This is based on His Word: "if any one of you does evil," that is, from those who believe in God's verses.

Secondly, the ignorance in "if any one of you does evil in ignorance" means the opposite of disbelief and obstinacy which are done on purpose and not out of ignorance. Verily one who calls his Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His favor, and isbeliever in God's verses does not disobey the Sublime out of arroganceand pride, rather out of ignorance which overcomes him as a result of following his desire or anger.

Thirdly, linking "turns (in repentance)" with "acts aright" is to prove that 'turning in repentance' can only happen with 'Acting aright' since the reality of returning to God and seeking refuge in His proximity, with its pure status, does not combine with filth of sins from which the repenting person cleanses himself. Repentance is not just saying: 'I return (in repentance) to God,' which does not move from the tongue to the heart as High be He Exalted has said: *...and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it...* (2:284).

Fourthly, God's attributes of actions like All-Forgiving and All- Merciful can be rightly tied to a time. Even though God, Glory be to Him has ordained mercy upon Himself but He does not manifest it norimplements its impact except when a servant of His commits a sin out of ignorance and then after repents and acts aright.

A relevant discussion on this theme has already passed under the commentary of: *Repentance with Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance, then turn* (*to Allah*) *soon, so these it is to whom Allah turns* (*mercifully*), *and Allah is All-knowing, Wise. And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says, "Surely, now I repent"; nor* (*for*) *those who die while they are unbelievers...* (4:17–18) in volume four of this book.[1]

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِينَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

(6:55) And thus do We make distinct the communications and so that the way of the guilty may become clear:

By looking at thecontext: "We make distinct the communications" means explaining the Divine Knowledge, and purifying it from ambiguity and fusion.

And the *la* (so that) in "so that the way of the guilty may become clear" indicates the purpose; and it is connected to an implied statement which has not been written out of deference and greatness of its meaning—and this is common in the God's speech such as: *...and We bring these days to men by turns, and that Allah may know those who believe...* (3:140), *and: And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure* (6:76).

1 See *al-Mīzān* (Eng. transl.), vol.8. (Trans.).

So, the meaning of the verse is that: This is how We explain and clarify the various sections of the Divine Knowledge, and remove whatever ambiguity has come upon it for important objectives; and one of those objectives is to identify the path of the guilty ones so that those who believe in Our verses may avoid it. Based on this: "the way of the guilty" means the path that the guilty ones traverse upon—against the verses that talk about God's Unity and its related true knowledge—and it is the path of disbelief, obstinacy, turning away from divine verses, and ungratefulness.

It has been said that the meaning of "the way of the guilty" means the path that has been adapted regarding the guilty ones; that is, God's attitude towards them of cursing them in this world, and implementing an evil reckoning and painful chastisement upon them in the hereafter.

However, the first meaning is more preferable by looking at the context of the verses of this chapter.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Kulaynī, based on the unconnected chain of narration, quotes Imām al-Riḍā who said: "Verily, God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, did not make our Holy Prophet die until He had completed for him the religion. He sent down upon him the Qur'an in which is clarification for everything, in it He clarified what is permissible as well as forbidden, and the penal code as well as the rules, and all that is required for the people. God, the Glorified, said: *We have not neglected anything in the Book*." (*al-Kāfī*)

(2) ʿAli b. Ibraḥīm al-Qummī narrates from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad who narrated from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad who narrates from Kathīr b. ʿAyyāsh who narrates from Abu al-Jārūd from Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) about the verse: *And they who reject Our communications are deaf and dumb,* he said: "*Deaf* from the guidance; *dumb* who cannot speak anything good; *in utter darkness* means in the darkness of unbelief; *whom Allah pleases He causes to err, and whom He pleases He puts on the right way*—this is the rejection of the Qadariyyah of this ummah whom God will raise on the Day of Resurrection with the Sabaeans, the Christians and the Magians, and thereupon they will say: *'Our Lord, we were not polytheists,'* God shall say: *See how they lied against their own souls, and that which they forged did pass away from them*."

The he (al-Bāqir) further said: "The Messenger of God said: 'Verily, every *ummah* has (a group like) Magians; and the Magians of this *ummah* are those who say: "There is no Divine Decree (*al-qadr*);" and they assume that the will and power is related to them and for them.' " (*al-Tafsīr*)

(3) While quoting this ḥadīth, the author of *al-Burhān* says: "In another copy of the *tafsīr* of ʿAli b. Ibraḥīm, this ḥadīth says: 'He (that is, the Holy Prophet) said: "Verily, every *ummah* has (a group like) Magians; and the Magians of this *ummah* are those who say: 'There is no Divine Decree;' and they assume that the will and power is neither for them nor against them." And in a third copy, it says that: 'They said: "There is no Divine Decree;" and they assume that the will and power is neither towards them nor for them.'" (*Tafsīr al-burhān*)

Author's comment: The issue of Divine Decree is from the issues that was discussed during the early era (of Islam); a group rejected *al-qadr*—which means the Will of God, Glory be to Him, has a partial connection to the actions of humans—and they proved independent will and power for humans in their actions and that they are theindependent creators of their actions. They have been named as al-Qadariyyah, the theologians who discuss the Divine Decree (*al-qadr*). Both sects, (the Shī'ahs and the Sunnīs) have narrated from the Holy Prophet that he said: "The Qadariyyah are the Magians of this *ummah*." The application of the term "Magians" on them is obvious since they believe that the human actions has a creator, that is,the human being, and there is a creator for all other things, that is, God, Glory be to Him; and this is the belief of the Dualists, (the Magians,)in two gods: the creator of the good and the creator of the evil.

There are other narrations from the Holy Prophet) and the Imāms of Ahlu al-Bayt which explain the narration as above, and prove that there is Divine Decree and God's Will has an impact in the actions of His servants as the Qur'an has proved.

The Mu'tazilah theological sect—and they deny the Divine Decree has interpreted the narration by saying that the Qadariyyah relate thegood and the evil all to a non-human creator. Some discussion on this subject has already occurred and its full discussion, God willing, will come in the future.

It is clear from what we have discussed that reconciling between the view that there is no Divine Decree (in human actions) and the view that

humans don't have any will or power (of their own) in reconciling mutually incompatible views since the former proves total independence of humans in their actions while the latter negates their will and power.

So, what exists in the two versions of the narration as a reconciliation of the view (that there is no Divine Decree) and the view (that humans have no will and power) is indeed the result of distortion doneby a scribe for whom the meaning was confusing and so he retained the words "no Divine Decree" but changed the rest of the narration.

(4) al-Suyūṭī has quoted from Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim,Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ṭabrānī in *al-Kabīr,* Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Shu'ab* from ʿUqbah b. ʿĀmir from the Holy Prophet who said: "If you see God giving (materialblessings) to a servant in this world while he is still engrossed in his sins, that he loves, then that is indeed *istidrāj* (luring someone into destruction)." Then the Messenger of God recited the verse: *But when they neglected that which they had been admonished, We opened for them the doors of all things, until when they rejoiced in what they were given We seized them suddenly; then lo! They were in utter despair* (6:44) and the verse after it. (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(5) al-Suyūṭī has quoted from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh from ʿIbādah b. al-Ṣāmit who said that the God's Messenger said: "Verily when God, the Blessed, the Sublime, intends continuation and growth of a community, He blesses them with abstinence and thrift; and when He intends a community to perish, He opens for them or opens upon them the door of deceit *until when they rejoiced in what they were given We seized them suddenly; then lo! They were in utter despair. So the roots of the people who were unjust were cut off; and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of theworlds*." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(6) al-Suyūṭī has quoted Ibn al-Mundhir from Jaʿfar who said: "God revealed to Dāwūd: 'Fear me in all situations; and you shouldbe most worried when blessings accumulate on you so that I shouldn't throw you down at that moment, then I will not look at you.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: His Word: "I shouldn't throw you down" is a negative form intending to warn; and His Word: "and then I will not look at you" is connected to the earlier negative verb.

(7) In the commentary of the verse: *Say:* "*Have you considered if the chastisement of Allah should overtake you...*" ʿAli b. Ibraḥīm al-Qummī says: "This was revealed when the Holy Prophet immigrated to Medina and his companions were afflicted with hardship,illness and sickness. So, they complained about it to the Holy Prophet and God then revealed: *Say* (to them, ʿO Muḥammad!) *Have you considered if the chastisement of Allah should overtake you suddenly or openly, will any be destroyed but the unjust people?'* It means that you will not be afflicted with anything but hardship and loss in this world whereas the painful punishment in which is perdition shall be inflicted only on the unjust people." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: This narration, besides its weakness (in chain of narrators), contradicts what has been copiously described that this sūrah of al-An'ām was revealed in Mecca all together and the content of the verse (under discussion) does not fit with the story (narrated above), and the context provided for its interpretation seems far from the style of the Qur'an.

(8) al-Ṭabrisī under the verse: *And warn with it those who fear that they shall be gathered to their Lord—there is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him—that they may guard* (against evil), says that al-Ṣādiq said: "Warn through the Qur'an those who fear meeting their Lord (on the Day of Judgement) so that you may entice them for what is with Him; for verily the Qur'an is an intercessor whose intercession will be accepted for them." (*Majma' al-bayān*)

Author's comment: The ḥadīth apparently is linking the pronoun in (besides Him) to the Qur'an (and so it would be ...*besides it*), and that is a correct meaning even though the Qur'an has not been described as "a guardian" in the Qur'an itself just as it has been named as "an Imām."

(9) al-Suyūṭī quotes from Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh, and Abū Nu'aym in *al-Ḥilyah* from ʿAbdullāh b. Mas'ūd who said: "Some prominent Qurayshī individuals passed by the Holy Prophet while Ṣuhayb, ʿAmmār, Bilāl, Khabbāb, and other poor Muslims like them were with him. So, they said: ʿO Muḥammad, are you satisfied with these people from your community? *Are these they upon whom Allah has conferred benefit from among us?* Are we supposed to be followersof these people? Drive them away from yourself, and once you have driven them away, we may follow you.' So, God revealed about

them: *And warn with it those who fear that they shall be gathered to their Lord...*" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: al-Ṭabrisī has also narrated this in *Majma' al-bayān* from al-Tha'labī through his chain of narrators from ʿAbdullāhb. Mas'ūd in a shorter form.

(10) al-Suyūṭī quotes from Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir from ʿIkrimah who said that ʿUtba b. Rabī'ah, Shaybah b. Rabī'ah, Qarẓah b. ʿAbd ʿAmr b. Nawfal, al-Ḥārith b. ʿĀmir b. Nawfal and Mut'im b. ʿUdayy b. al-Khiyār b. Nawfal from among the nobles of the unbelievers from (descendants of) ʿAbd Manāf went to Abū Ṭālib and said: "If your nephew drives away from us those low ones—and they indeed are our slaves and servants—that will create a great (respect) for him in our hearts, make us more amenable to him, and bring us closer to accept him and follow him."

Abū Ṭālib mentioned that to the Holy Prophet. ʿUmar (b. al-Khaṭṭāb who was in that gathering) said: "I wish you, O God's Messenger, would do that, so that we can see whether they really intendto do what they are saying, and what way do they go." So, God revealed: *And warn with it those who fear that they shall be gathered to their Lord*—to His Word—*Does not Allah best know the grateful?*

ʿIkrimah continues: "And those (slaves who had accepted Islam) were Bilāl, ʿAmmār b. Yāsir, Sālim (slave of Abū Ḥudhayfah) and Subḥ (slave of Usayd); and from among the *ḥulafā'*[1] were Ibn Mas'ūd, al-Miqdād b. ʿAmr, Wāqid b. ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥanẓalī, ʿAmr b. ʿAbd ʿUmar, Dhu al-Shimālayn, Murthid b. Abī Murthid and others like them.

"The verse: *And thus do We try some of them by others* was about the Qurayshī leaders of the unbelief, the slaves and those allied to the Quraysh. When this verse was revealed, ʿUmar came forward and apologized for his earlier statement; and so God revealed *and when those who believe in Our communications come to you...*" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(11) al-Suyūṭī quotes from Abū Shaybah, Ibn Mājah, Abū Ya'lā, Abū

1 *Ḥulafā'*: is plural of *ḥalīf*, that is, those foreigners who were allied to one or the other tribe of Mecca. (Trans.)

Nu'aym in *al-Ḥilyah*; and Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalā'il* from Khabbāb who said:

"al-Aqra' b. Ḥābis al-Tamīmī and 'Uyaynah b. Ḥaṣīn al-Fazārī found the Holy Prophet with Bilāl, Ṣuhayb, 'Ammār, and Khabbāb among the people who were socially weak believers. When they saw them around him, they derided them. Then they came to the Holy Prophet alone and said: 'We want you to appoint a (distinct) place for us with you so that the Arab may know our superiority since delegations of the Arab will soon come to you and we will be embarrassed if they see us sitting with those low status people. So, when we come to you, remove them from your gathering, and once wehave left, you may sit with them if you wish.' He said, 'Okay.' They said, 'Then write for us a document binding you to it.' He asked for a paper and called 'Ali to write the document while we were sitting in one corner.

"That is when Jibrīl came down with this verse: *And do not drive away those who call their Lord in the morning and the evening*— to His Word—*say: 'Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself...'* The Messenger of God (threw away the paper from his hand and he called us; so we came to him while he was saying: '*Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself.* 'So, we used to sit with him, and whenever he wanted to stand up to go, he would stand up and leave us. Then God revealed: *And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill...*" Khabbāb continues: "So, the Messenger of God would sit with us thereafter and when the time camefor him to get up, we would leave him so that he may go." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: al-Ṭabrisī has narrated this in *Majma' al-bayān* from Salmān (al-Fārisī) and Khabbāb; and there are other narrations similar to the last three narrations. However, by looking back at the numerous narrations at the beginning of this sūrah which prove that this sūrah was revealed all together and also by contemplating on the context of the verses, there is no doubt that these narrations are surely like what we have termed as 'Application' (of verses to events) in the sense that the companions found the content of some verses applicable to some events which took place during the Holy Prophet's time and so considered those events as occasions of

revelation of the verse; and not in the sense that the verse was revealed all by itself because of that event in order to clarify matters about it. It is applied to the event in the sense that the doubts about that event were removed in light of that verse just as doubts in other similar circumstances were also clarified in its light as we see in the three narrations about the revelation of the verse: And do not drive away those who call their Lord. The purpose of the verse is same but the stories are different even though they are similar: it seems that the elite of Mecca came to the Holy Prophet and proposed time and again that he push the socially weak Muslims away from himself and that at each time some of the socially weak Muslims were present. The content of the verse has affinity with these or some of the suggestions of the Meccans.

This is how the companions used to describe the reasons for revelation of the verses in form of stories or events that had occurred during the Holy Prophet's time which have kind of a relevance to the contents of the holy verses without the verse actually having any connection to the particular story or event that was narrated. Then with the spread of the trend of quoting *aḥādīth* based on meaning (rather than verbatim) and wide circulation of this trend created a delusion that the verses were revealed for those specific events to the extent of becoming the exclusive reasons (for their revelation).

So, there is no reliance on such kinds of *aḥādīth* narrated on the occasion of revelation, especially in the examples of this sūrah which is among those revealed all together. The most that these *aḥādīth* can do is to show a kind of connection of (the theme of) the verses to the events which occurred during the time of the Holy Prophet in particularwith the spread of fabrication and interpolation in these narrations as well as their weakness, and leniency of the early scholars in accepting and quoting them.

(12) al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-manthūr* quotes from al-Zubayr b. Bakār in *Akhbār al-Madīnah* from ʿUmar b. ʿAbdillāh Ibn al-Muhājir that the verse (6:52) was revealed when some people proposedto the Holy Prophet to drive away the weak ones from Aṣḥāb al-Ṣuffah[1] from himself, similar to the story (mentioned earlier). This narration is considered weak based on the fact that the sūrah was revealed all together and that also in Mecca before the immigration.

(13) al-ʿAyyāshī quotes from Abū ʿAmr al-Zubayrī from Abū ʿAbdillāh

1 Aṣḥāb al-Ṣuffah were the homeless Muslims who lived under a shade besides the Prophet's Mosque. (Trans.)

(al-Ṣādiq) who said: "God showers mercy upon someone who repented to God before death. Verily repentance purifiesthe abomination of the sin and prevents from misery of perdition. God has made the mercy a duty upon Himself for His righteous servants as He has said: '*...your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself,* (so) *that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful.*'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

(14) al-Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, in *al-Burhān,* quotes from ʿAbdullāh b. al-ʿAbbās that the verse: *And when those who believe in Our communications come to you ...* was revealed about ʿAli, Ḥamzah and Zayd (b. Ḥārithah). (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: There are many narrations which say that the verses previous to it were revealed about the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt. Apparently, all these narrations are based on flow and application (of a verse on its best examples) or based on the esoteric meaning since the revelation of the sūrah in Mecca all together prevents one from considering these narrations as the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*); and, therefore, we refrained from quoting them. And God knows the best.

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Verses 56–73

These verses are the closing arguments against the polytheists in favor of monotheism and other related themes of prophethood and resurrection; and they form a single well-connected narrative.

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ قُلْ لَا أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَاءَكُمْ ۙ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

(6:56) Say: "I am forbidden to serve those whom you call upon besides Allah." Say: "I do not follow your low desires, for then indeed I should have gone astray and I should not be of those who go aright."

It is a command to the Holy Prophet that he should inform the polytheists about the prohibition that has come upon him regarding worshiping their gods. It is an implied way of conveying the prohibition about worshiping them.

The next sentence: "Say: 'I do not follow your low desires,'" explains the basis of prohibition since worshiping the idols would be following the low desires, and he has been forbidden from doing so. Then the verse: "'for then indeed I should have gone astray and I should not be of those who go aright,'" indicates the reason for not following the low desires: doing so would be misguidance and separation from the group of rightly-guided ones, those who are known by the quality of accepting God's guidance and are recognized by it. Following the low desires negates the continuity of guidance in the person's soul and prevents the light of monotheism from illuminating his heart, an illumination that is constant and beneficial.

These words form a summary of a complete and rationalized statement for prohibition or avoidance of worshiping their idols. It means that worshiping them would be following the low desires, and following low desires is misguidance and separation from the ranks of those guided aright by Divine guidance.

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ مَا عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۚ إِنِ

الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۖ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(6:57) Say: "Surely I have manifest proof from my Lord and you call it a lie; I have not with me that which you would hasten; the judgment is only Allah's; He relates the truth and He is the best of separators (between truth and falsehood)."

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al-Bayyinah means 'the manifest proof' and it is from *al-bayān* which means 'clarity'. The original meaning of this word is separation of a thing from another in such a way that they do not join or mix. From *al-bayān* is derived *al-bayn, al-bawn, al-baynūnah*, etc. *al-Bayyinah* (the manifest proof) is known as *bayyinah* because the truth is separated from the falsehood; and so it becomes clear and it becomes easy to identify it without any difficulty and effort.

The pronoun 'it' in "and you call it a lie" refers to the Qur'an; and the apparent context demands that the lie be related to the manifest proof that is with the Holy Prophet, and this is supported by next sentence: "I have not with me that which you would hasten..." By considering this latter sentence, the meaning of the verse is as follows: One of the manifest proofs by which God has supported my messengership is the Qur'an that you have rejected; and what you are demanding from me and asking to hasten one of the signs (that is, the punishment) is not in my control nor is its decision delegated to me. Consequently, there is no point of agreement between us since I have been given (the Qur'an as a sign) that you do not want and you demand that what I have not been given.

It is clear from the above that the pronoun in "and you call it a lie" refers to the manifest proof which is contained in the Qur'an. And verily the statement: "I have not with me that which you would hasten..." means implicitly denying any control over what they would like to hasten. What a human mostly controls (especially in case of giving and bestowing) are things that are with him or at least stored with him and under his control, and then he gives out from it whatever he wishes. Therefore, the meaning of "*I have not with me*" is denial of control and power in the style of denying the consequence by denying the cause.

His statement "the judgment is only God's..." explains the reasonfor denial and that is why it has occurred in negative form. (Its literal translation would be: "the judgement is not but of God.") Moreover, the exceptional clause ('only') denotes the exclusivity of the matter to prove that the

negation is universal in the sense that no one but the Almighty God has the judgment and it depends on Him only.

A Talk on the Meaning of Judgment and that it Belongs to God Only

al-Ḥukm denotes kind of formation by which various elements (of an entity) are smoothly joined, and its gaps and cracks filled so that it does not break up into sections and does not scatterinto parts in a way that its impact is weakened and its perimeters are diminished. That basic meaning connects its various derivatives such as *al-iḥkām* (to solidify s.t.), *al-taḥkīm* (to strengthen s.t.), *al-ḥikmah* (wisdom), *al-ḥukūmah* (governance), etc.

Man has realized the materialization of this meaning in civic duties and rights that exist in society; so when the rulers and leaders command an issue, they are actually imposing the duty upon the subordinates and tying it to them in a knot that cannot be undone, a binding from which they cannot free themselves. Similarly between the owner of a property and the property itself, and between someone who has a right in a matter and the matter itself there is a kind of connection that prevents others from interfering between the person and his property or his right, and consequently prevents their encroachment. So, when a person disputes with the owner of a property about its ownership by claiming it for himself or with a person who has a right by denying his right, he has actually sought to loosen the connection and weaken the link between the two. And when the arbiter or the judge to whom the case was presented gives the property or the right to one of two claimants, he makes a judgement (*ḥukm*), in other words he actually creates a firm link after its weakness and a strong connection after its feebleness. When the judge says, "The ownership of the property is for so-and-so or the right is of so-and-so," this becomes the judgement that ends the basis of dispute and disagreement; and no one can interfere between the owner and the property or between the person and his right. In short, the ruler in his command and the judge in his judgement create the connection between the two sides and remove any weakness and barrier in between—and this is known as *al-ḥukm*.

This is how the people came to perceive the meaning of *al-ḥukm* in conventional man-made issues; then they realized that its meaning could also be applied to issues pertaining to the actual creation when related to the fate and Divine Decree. For example, the seed will develop in the earth

and then flourishes as a trunk and branches with leaves and fruits; or, for example, the sperm-drop changes into a body with life and feelings, etc. This all happens because of God's *ḥukm* and decree. This is what we derive from the meaning of *al-ḥukm*: establishing (a link or a right) of one thing to another or establishing a correlation of one thing with something else.

The concept of monotheism (*tawḥīd*), which is the foundation of the teachings of the Noble Qur'an, proves that the actual impact in the universe emanates solely from Almighty God who has no partner. Of course, the Qur'an relates this relationship of the Divine to the process of creation of the universe in different ways depending on the variety of situations, and not in one single style: you will notice that sometimes He links issue of creation to Himself and at other times He links it to other things differently. (This is not only in the matter of creation,) similarly, when it comes to other attributes like knowledge, power, life, will, sustenance, and beauty, the Qur'an sometimes relates these qualities to the Divine exclusively and sometimes to others.

Since the actual impact emanates from God, the Divine *ḥukm*—which is kind of an impact and creation of the Almighty—is also the same, whether it pertains to the actual world of creation or to conventional realm of laws. The Qur'an confirms this meaning (of *ḥukm*) in the following verses: *...the judgement is only Allah's...* (6:57; 12:67); *...now surely His is the judgement...* (6:62); *...All praise is due to Him in this* (*life*) *and the hereafter, and His is the judgement...* (28:70); *...And Allah pronounces a judgement—there is no repeller of His decree...* (13:41). If anyone else than Almighty God had a *ḥukm*, it was necessary for him to demonstrate it and contradict the Divine Will. He also says: *...so judgement belongs to Allah, the High, the Great;* (40:12). These verses, specifically or generally, prove the creative will (*al-ḥukm al-takwīnī*) exclusively for the Almighty. (This was about the realm of existence and creation.)

When it comes to the legislative will (*al-ḥukm al-tashrī'ī*) and its exclusively for the Almighty, it can be proven by the following verse: *...judgement is only Allah's; He has commanded that you shall not worship aught but Him; this is the right religion...* (12:40). The earlier verses also apparently prove that the *ḥukm*, will, is exclusively for the Almighty and no one is part of it. However, God sometimes relates the *ḥukm*, especially the legislative will, to others in His words such as: *...as two just persons among you shall judge...* (5:95); and in His statement to David: "*O David! Surely We have made you*

a vicegerent in the land; so judge between men with justice..." (38:26); and in His statement to the Prophet: *And that you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed...* (5:49); *...therefore judge between by what Allah has revealed...* (5:48); *...with it the prophets... judged...* (5:44), and other similar verses. Placing these verses alongside the first group of verses shows that the *ḥukm*, will, originally and primarily belongs to Almighty God; and that others are not independent in this matter and if any will exists for them, it is by His permission and on a secondary basis. Therefore, God considers Himself as the best and the most excellent of judges since originally, independently and primarily judgement belongs to Him. He said: *Is not Allah the best of the Judges?* (95:8) and *...and He is the best of the Judges;* (7:87).

As you can observe from the above, the verses that link the *ḥukm* to other than God (of course, with His permission and consent) are confined to the conventional matters; but when it comes to the command of creation, as far as I can recall, there is no such attribution to other than Him. Nonetheless, the attribution of the meanings of the general qualities and actions of God to other than Him (with His will and consent)—such as knowledge, power, life, creation, sustenance, giving-life, will, etc.—can be seen in many verses which we don't need to quote here.[1]

This difference in attribution perhaps was in deference to thesanctity of Almighty God by portraying His qualities with independence that cannot be attributed to the secondary causes. Divine will and decree in matters of actual creation is such; and its examples can be seen in the terms like *al-Badī'* (the originator) and *al-Fāṭir* (the creator), and other words that follow their pattern in portraying kind of an exclusivity in their meanings; and their attribution to other than God is avoided out of deference to the sanctity of Divinity.

Let us return to where we were about the commentary of the verse: "... the judgment is only God's..." The meaning of *al-ḥukm* (command, judgement) here is the Divine Decree in the matters of creation. This sentence explains the negative statement that has occurred before it: "I have not with

1 For example, where qualities and actions of God have been attributed, with His will, to others, the reader may refer to the following verses: 32:11 (act of giving death is attributed to the angel); 3:49 (act of creation and knowledge of the unseen is attributed to Prophet Jesus); 2:255 (a general statement about access to the knowledge of the unseen with God's permission); 2:260 (act of creation attributed to Prophet Abraham). (Trans.)

me that which you would hasten." And so the meaning within its proper context is that creative command belongs to God only and it is not for me to judge between you and I—that is what you are seeking to be hastened by asking of me to bring upon a sign (that is, the punishment).

Based on this, the sentence: "I have not with me that which you would hasten" has been used as an indirect expression; it is as if by asking him to bring a sign other than the Qur'an, they were asking him to judge between them and himself. Perhaps this is the purpose behind repeating the relative pronoun (*mā*—that which) and the relative clause (*tasta'jilūna*—you desire to hasten) in the following verse: Say: "If that which you desire to hasten were with me..." The apparent context demanded that it should have been said, "If that was with me..."

The meaning of the verse: "*that which you desire to hasten*" refers to the first verse and entails that the judgement be finalized between them and him, as is the Divine Tradition. This has been repeated in thesecond verse. It is also possible to reverse the indirect expression and so the meaning of "that which you desire to hasten" would be the final judgement as an obvious meaning in the first verse and in the second verse it would be as an indirect expression.

Also, His Word: "...He separates the truth and He is the best of separators (between truth and falsehood)." (This term *yaquṣṣu* (relate) has been recited differently by the reciters.) 'Āṣim, Nāfi' and Ibn Kathīr from the seven (famous reciters) have recited it as it occurs now with *qāf* and *ṣād* without a dot, and it means to cut off things and to separate it from something else as it has occurred in: *And he said to his sister,* "*separate him;*" (28:11). However, the rest of reciters have recited it with *qāf* and *ḍād* (that is, *ṣād* with a dot) from the root *qaḍā'* (and so it is recited *yaqaḍḍu*) and the *yā'* (in the end of that word) has been omitted as it has happened in: *consummate wisdom but warnings do not avail;* (54:5). Both recitations have merits but as far as the meaning is concerned, both are the same: to relate the truth and to separate it from the falsehood is a sure result of judgement and decree on basis of the truth. Nonetheless, the words: "He is the best of separators" is more appropriate with the term *yaquṣṣu* in the meaning of separating.

Some of the commentators of the Qur'an have taken the word *yaquṣṣu* in the meaning of relating something or in the meaning of following the footsteps. However, the context does not support these meanings.

As for the first meaning (of these two interpretations): although Almighty God has narrated in His Book many stories of the prophets and

their nations but there is no such narration in the context of the present passages, and so there is no basis to take the word as His narration.

As for the second meaning: it would mean that it is God's tradition to follow the truth and its implications in managing His Kingdom and organizing the affairs of His creation. Although God does not decide but on basis of the truth; and does not judge but on basis of the truth, nonetheless the decorum of the Noble Qur'an wouldn't accept the style of describing the act of following to the Almighty. Among other things, God has said: *The truth is from your Lord.* (3:60); and did not say: "The truth is with God" since there is an indication of weakness and dependency in the term 'with'.

A Talk on the Meaning of Reality of God's Action and Judgment

The action and judgement of the Almighty God is the actual truth, not just *according* to the truth or *conforming* to it. The following is its discussion:

An entity can only be true if it actually exists in the real world and not just be a figment of one's imagination or creation of a mind. For example, the human being is one of the true existing entities as well as the earth on which he resides, also the vegetation and animals upon which he feeds.

A report or news can only be true if it is according to the proven reality, independent of our perception.

A decree or judgement can only be true if it is according to the norm that prevails in the world. When a ruler gives a command or a judge passes a verdict, that command or verdict will be 'the absolute truth' if it is according to the general good based on the prevailing norm in the world; and it would be 'the relative truth' if it is according to the relative good based on the norm of the world in a partial manner without considering the overall global system.

So, when someone commands us to maintain justice or refrain from injustice that command is considered a truth. How? The system of the world (devised by the Almighty) leads things to their fortune and good end; and it has decreed upon the humans to live as social beings and it demands upon all segments of the society to harmonize their various sections and not to disrupt or destroy one another so that it can attain the portion of its success in this world. The general good of a society is the basis of this success in this life, and the command to maintain justice and refrain from injustice is in accordance with that objective. So, both these commands are the truth.

Whereas the command to inflict injustice or withhold justice is not in accordance with that success and so they are the falsehood.

al-Tawḥīd (monotheism) is the truth since it leads the human being to success in his true life whereas *al-shirk* (polytheism) is falsehood since it leads to a devastating suffering and perpetual chastisement.

Similarly, a judgement between the two litigants will only be the truth if it is in accordance with the legal opinion that takes into account the general good of all people or of a particular group or a specific community. And the real good or welfare, as you already know, is based on the prevailing norm in the world whether it be absolute or relative.

Thus, it becomes clear that the truth, whatever it may be, is based on the real world and the system that governs it and the norm prevailing within it. Moreover, there is no doubt that the world and the existence—with all its system, norms and intricacies—is the act of the Almighty: it starts from Him; it is sustained by Him, and eventually returns to Him. So, the truth (whatever it may be) and the general good (however it may be) follow His action and trail His direction, and they exist only by being attributed to Him; and it is not that God follows the truth in His action or follows its direction. The Almighty is the True by Himself, and whatever is other than Him is true because of Him.

We, the humans in our free actions, whenever we wish to supplement the deficiencies in our existence and fulfill the needs of our lives our actions that are sometimes in accordance with our desired success and sometimes are in divergence to it—we are forced in this process to take into consideration the side of general good that we deem to be good; in other words, in which lies the good of our situation and success of our endeavour. This leads us to obey the prevailing laws and general rules, to consider the laws and social norms worthy of being fulfilled and followed since it entails the good of humanity and contains the desired success.

This leads us to believe that good (*al-maṣlaḥa*) and evil (*al-mafsadah*) exist in the real sense, independent of the realms of mind and outside it, and separate from the domains of knowledge and sight; and they show their effect in the external world, positively and negatively. So, when our actions or laws are in accordance with the real good, per se, it will result in good and attain success; but when they oppose the real good and follow the real existing evil, it will result in every harm and evil. (This leads us to believe that) this kind of existence (of good and evil) is a real existence that cannot bedestroyed or

changed; and that the good and evil, in the real sense, as well as the qualities related to them (that compel people to act or to refrain) such as good action and evil action, and the laws derived fromthem (like the obligation of doing or refraining from something)—all these have real existence that refuse to disappear or change; and they govern us and push us to do certain things and refrain from someother. (We are also led to believe that) the intellect is able to perceive these realities just as it perceives other existing entities.

When some (theologians) realized that the Divine rules and laws were not different in purpose from the (man-made) rules and laws found in human societies, and that God's actions also do not differ from our actions in that perspective, they concluded that the Divine laws and actions are like our actions—that is, they are based on real good and are characterized by goodness; in conclusion, they believed that the real good influences the Almighty's actions and governs His laws, more so because He knows the reality of issues and is aware of His servants' good.

This is entirely the result of leaning to one extreme of spectrum. From what we have discussed above, you know that laws and regulationsare relative entities and not real: natural desires and needs of sociallife have compelled us to consider them and legislate them; they donot exist outside the realm of the society and they don't have any (intrinsic) value; they are only realities that exist in the realm ofconsideration and legislation that are used by humans to distinguishthe actions that are beneficial from those that are harmful, the good from the evil, and the fortunate from the hardship.

The biases of the two theological groups during the early days of Islam led them to surprising extreme spectrums in this topic. The *mufawwiḍah*[1], on the one hand, believed that the benefit and harm or the goodness and evil were actual realities, eternal and everlasting, never changing or altering; and that these realities govern God's commands and prohibitions, and have impact on His actions, both in the realm of creation as well as legislation, thus forbidding certain things and allowing some other. In conclusion, they removed the Almighty from His authority and negated His absolute power.

The *mujabbirah,*[2] on the other hand, denied all this, and insisted that

1 The *mufawwiḍah* refers to those who believed in 'delegation of absolute power to the humans' and this view was represented by the Mu'tazilah school of theology. (Trans.)

2 The *mujabbirah* refers to those who believed in compulsion of Divine Will in

the characteristic of 'good' in anything comes to exist only when God commands it and the characteristic of 'evil' in anything comes to exist only when God forbids it; and there is no reason or purpose in creation or legislation; and that the human being is not responsible in any way for his actions and has no power on them. This is in contrast to the view of the first group who believed that actions are purely creation of humans and that God, Glory be to Him has no power at all over their actions. These two views, as you can see, are on two extremes; neither of the two is correct.

The truth is that all these are relative, conventional issues but they have a real basis: that the human (and other social animals like him) who seeks eternity and success in life, is imperfect and in need. He seeks to remove the imperfections and to fulfill the needs through social activities that emanate from consciousness and determination. This forces him to characterize his actions (and matters related to his actions in seeking to reach the success and avoid the pain) with external qualities such as good, evil, obligatory, prohibition, permissible, ownership, right, etc. He then applies on them the spectrum of cause and effect (that is observed in and derived from the real world), and as a result lays down general and specific laws. He also believes that these laws have kind of a reality like the actual entities and he does this so that he can achieve his social life.

This is how we come to believe that justice is good just as the rose is good and beautiful or that injustice is evil just as the dead body is abhorrent (as a food item); and that the property belongs to us just as our own limbs belong to us; and that the certain act is obligatory as the effect of a perfect cause would be obligatory, etc. That is why you will see variance in the views among nations when the goal of life changes: some will consider an act acceptable while other will consider it reprehensible, some will abrogate laws that others legislate; some are oblivious of something that others value or they appreciate it while others shun it; sometimes in a same nation you will see that a prevailing tradition is abandoned, then readopted, and then shunned again based on where the pendulum of its social compass turns. This is observed in case of variance in the purposes in societies. But when it comes to the general goals in which no two persons differ (such as the need for a society, or positive value of justice or negative value of injustice,

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human actions and this view was represented, among others, by the Ashā'irah school of theology. (Trans.)

etc.), then there is no need for characterizing them as good, evil, obligatory, prohibited, etc., since there is no difference of opinion in them. All this is about the human dimension.

When the Almighty God moulded His religion in the mould of general social norms, He considered (while describing the true teachings moulded in the social norms) what we take into consideration in our lives: He wants us to reflect about His teachings and whatever realities that we receive from Him just as we reflect about the norms of life. He has considered Himself as the Lord who is worshiped and has considered us as the servants who are nurtured. Also, He has reminded us that He has a religion that consists of fundamental beliefs and practical laws which entails rewards and punishments, and that in obeying Him lies our benefit, our eventual good and success of our endeavours based on the path that we follow in our social views. So there are true beliefs that we must believe in and be committed to, and there are duties and religious laws (in rituals, commercial and social matters) that we must adhere to and consider—all human societies are based on this reality.

This allows us to seek religious knowledge (beliefs or laws) just as we seek social knowledge (concepts or rules), and to base the religious knowledge on intellectual views and practical wisdom just as we base the social knowledge on them. So, (we come to believe that) Almighty God does not choose for His servants the duties and obligations but that there is goodness in them that improves their state in this world and the hereafter, He does not command anything but what is good and beautiful, and He does not forbid anything but that which is evil and disgusting in which is corruption of the faith or the world; and He does not do anything but that the reason also approves it; and He does not avoid anything expect that the reason wants us to avoid.

However, God has also reminded us of two things:

Firstly, the reality in its essence is greater than this and evermightier (i.e. beyond the comprehension of our intellect). Verily all this knowledge has been derived from social views and these in realitydo not extend beyond social norms and do not reach the heights of heavens (like the Qur'an) as He says: *Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom;* (43:3–4). And He also said in the parable that He made: *He sends down water from the cloud, then the valleys flow* (with water) *according to*

their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of (making) *ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood...* (13:17). The Holy Prophet said: "Verily, we the assembly of the prophets, have been commanded to speak with the people according to the level of their intelligence." And the like what has come in the Book (of God) and *aḥādīth*.

This does not mean that we should deny the concept of good and benefit, for example, in relation to the acts of the Almighty by proving its opposite that would end in believing in evilness in His actions or consider them purposeless like a child's actions—exalted is He from such thoughts. Similarly, denying a physical eye for intelligence does not mean attributing blindness to it or denying its ability to perceive, rather it means to separate it from deficiency.

Secondly, although the dimensions of good and advantages of benefits are used as justification for Divine actions and His commandments, and also used to explain the duties of servitude just as they are used to justify our rational rules and actions—nonetheless there is a difference between the two spheres. The dimensions of good and advantages of benefits lead our intentions and are influential in our choices; therefore, as rational beings, whenever we see an act of good quality with a benefit, without any impediment, we are compelled to do the action; and when we see a law with that quality, we don't hesitate in legislating it in our society.

These dimensions of good and welfare are nothing but meanings that we have derived from the system of the creation in the real world that is independent of our minds and separated from us; and therefore we decided to choose the good and beneficial actions so that we do not deviate from our path and so that we base our actions on the system prevailing in the universe and be on the path of reality. So, these dimensions of good are concepts derived from the real world and our actions branching out from them are result of that and affected by them. This is same for our actions as well as the commandments legislated by us. (This is the human dimension of things.)

The action of the Almighty, on the other hand, is the actual world and the real existence from which we derive the dimensions of good and welfare, and they are based on it since we have derived them from it. So, how can God's action be considered as having branched out from them and be affected by them? Similarly, His legislated commandments generate the reality and not that they follow the reality. Understand and ponder (the

difference between the two spheres).

(Conclusion:) It is now clear that the dimensions of good and welfare, even though they exists in God's actions and commandments as well as in our actions and laws (since we are intelligent beings), they are different: in relation to our actions and laws, those dimensions lead and affect them—or you may say, they are the compelling causes and reasons for them; but in relation to God's actions and commandments, they are intrinsic and inseparable—or you may say, they have beneficial consequences. Since we are rational beings, we do whatever we do and we legislate whatever we legislate in order to seek goodness and success, and to acquire what we do not possess yet. However, the Almighty God does whatever He does and commands whatever He commands because He is God. Even though the result of His action is same as the result of our action as far as goodness and welfare is concerned, we are accountable for our actions which are tied to their compelling causes and purposes; but He is not accountable (to anyone) for His actions and they are not tied to compelling causes for acquiring what He might not already possess, rather its goodness and purposes are already integral part of the actions. He is not questioned about what He does while they (the people) will be questioned. Think and ponder on this.

This can be seen in the Almighty's statement: *He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned.* (21:23); *...All praise is due to Him in this* (life) *and the hereafter, and His is the judgement...* (28:70); *...And Allah does what He pleases,* (14:27); *...And Allah pronounces a judgement—there is no repeller ofHis decree...* (13:41)

If the action of the Almighty were similar to our rational actions then His judgement would have a repeller unless it is supported by a praise-worthy benefit, and consequently He will not be able to do whatever He pleases, rather He will be compelled by that benefit.

(The fact that benefits are linked to the actions but they don't compel the Almighty in what He pleases to do, as it can also be seenin the following verses:) *Say: "Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency ..."* (7:28); *O you who believe! Answer* (the call of) *Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life...* (8:24); and other similar verses that justify the Divine Commandments as dimensions of goodness and benefit.

Commentary continues:

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِى مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِىَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِى وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ

أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(6:58) Say: "If that which you desire to hasten were with me, the matter would have certainly been decided between you and me; and Allah best knows the unjust."

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It means that if I was capable of doing what you want from me—and if the sign (that is, punishment) comes down to a messenger, it shall be a decisive judgement between him and his people—the matter will be finally decided between me and you, and one of the two groups will be saved while the other will be punished and destroyed; and it will punish or destroy only you because you are the unjust, and the Divine punishment seizes only the unjust ones for their injustice. The Almighty is above the level of those who get confused in the judgement and who are unable to distinguish the unjust from the innocent, and thus end up punishing me instead.

The words: "and God best knows the unjust" is kind of an indication and justification (for the decisive judgement); in other words, it is surely you who will be punished because you are indeed the unjust ones and the Divine chastisement does not pass from the unjust to the others. This sentence reaffirms the message of a previous verse: *Say: "Have you considered if the chastisement of Allah should overtake yousuddenly or openly, will any be destroyed but the unjust people?"* (6:47)

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وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾

(6:59) And with Him are the keys of the unseen—none knows them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea; and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor any thing green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book.

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In explaining the connection of this verse to the previous one, some commentators say that since the previous verse ended with thewords: *and Allah best knows the unjust,* the Almighty God added thestatement that the treasures of the unseen or the keys of those treasuresare with Him, none knows them but He and He knows every sublime and subtle matter.

This explanation does not clarify the exclusivity seen in the verse: "none knows them but He." It is better to link this verse with the theme of both previous verses (from *Say:* "*Surely I have manifest proof from my Lord...* to *...and Allah best knows the unjust.*"), since they together state that the sign and its inevitable outcome that they were asking from the Holy Prophet is, indeed, in full control of God and no one else has any say in it; and that He knows the judgement and He is not confused in judging and punishing the unjust people since He is Aware of them; and that He exclusively knows the unseen, He knows the sublime as well as the subtle issues, and neither does He miss something nor forget. He further elaborates this by His Word: "And with Him are the keys of the unseen," thereby He clarifies His exclusive control on the knowledge of the unseen and that His knowledge encompasses everything. Then He completes His statement by the next three verses.

In this way, the context of the verses become like some other similar verses such as those in the story of Prophet Hūd and his people: *They said:* "*Have you come to us to turn us away from our gods; then bring us what you threaten us with, if you are of the truthful ones.*" *He said:* "*The knowledge is only with Allah, and I deliver to you the message with which I am sent...*" (46:22–23).

And with Him are the keys of the unseen: *al-Mafātiḥ* (the keys) is plural of *maftaḥ* in the meaning of a treasure; it could also be plural of *miftaḥ* in the meaning of a key. This latter rendering is supported by the non-canonical recitation: (*wa ʿindahu mafātīḥu al-ghayb*—'And with Him are the keys of the unseen'). The conclusions of both meanings are the same: whosoever has the keys of the treasures is aware of what is in them and has power to use them as he pleases just as the one who has the treasures themselves. However, other similar verses in the Qur'an support the first meaning since the Almighty has repeatedly talked about His treasures and the treasures of His mercy (and that is in seven instances) and in none of those cases has the word "keys" occurred: *Or have they the treasures of your Lord with them?* (52:37); *Say: "I do not say to you, 'I have with me the treasures of Allah...'"* (6:50); *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it...* (15:21); *And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth...* (63:7); *Or is it that they have the treasures of the mercy of your Lord...?* (38:9). Therefore, the most appropriate meaningof *mafātīḥ* is the treasures of the unseen.

In any case, the verse: "And with Him are the keys of the unseen" intends to state the exclusivity of the knowledge of the unseen to the Almighty either

by saying that the treasures of the unseen are not known to anyone but God or by saying that the keys of the unseen are not known by other than God. So, no one else has access to those treasures since he does not have knowledge of their keys by which he can open them and use what is therein.

Although the beginning of the verse talks about the exclusivity of the knowledge of the unseen to Almighty, its latter part is not restricted to the knowledge of the unseen; rather it mentions that His knowledge encompasses everything no matter whether it is unseen or seen—after all not everything 'wet or dry' can be classified as unseen. This is clear enough. So, the verse in general clarifies the encompassing nature of Almighty's knowledge covering every unseen and seen item; even though it's beginning part talks about the unseen and its latter part talks about both the unseen and the seen.

From another perspective, the beginning of the verse deals with the unseen that is in the treasures of the unseen under the covers of secrecy and the locks of obscurity. The Almighty God says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure,* (15:21). Verily the things that are in 'the treasures of the unseen with Him' are not entities that can be comprehended by visible boundaries nor can they be quantified by known measures. Moreover, there is no doubt that they are 'unseen treasures' because they are beyond the determination of boundary and measure; and we cannot comprehend any information unless it is limited and measured. Furthermore, the things in the treasures of the unseen are—before descending to the level of visibility and declining to the stage of limit and measure; and, in short, before they come to exist in a measured form—without any boundary and measure even though they exist in a kind of (abstract) existence with the Almighty as mentioned in the verse.

The entities that exist in this visible world, bound by time, existed before their (material) existence with God in His treasures in a kind of existence that is abstract and without measure even if we are unable to comprehend their form of existence; they existed within the keys of the unseen and its treasures before their (material) existence and their settling down at the stage of measure and time.

Perhaps there are other things preserved within these treasures that are not comparable to the things that are time-bound, and known and familiar to us. This kind of the unseen that has not yet emerged on the scene of visibility is known as "*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*—the absolute unseen."

(Then there is "*al-ghayb al-nisbi*—the relative unseen"). The things

that are wrapped in the cover of (physical) reality and descend to the level of limits and measures were (previously) in the treasures of the unseen, that is, in the category of the absolute unseen. However, these same entities—with their limits and measures—can still be comprehended by our eyes and intelligence: So, when we come to know about them, they are considered as 'seen'; and when we don't know about them, then they are considered as 'unseen'. When such things are unknown to us, it is appropriate to name them as "the relative unseen." For example, something that is inside a house, it is 'seen' in relation to those who are inside it; and it is 'unseen' in relation to those who are outside it. These descriptions are relative to those inside or outside the house. This relativity can also be seen in lights and colors: they are discernible by the vision and so are 'seen' in relation to the eyes but 'unseen' in relation to the ears. Similarly, the sounds that are discernible by the ears are 'seen' in relation to the ears but 'unseen' in relation to the eyes; and both are 'seen' in relation to a human being who has eyes and ears but 'unseen' to those who are blind and deaf.

What God has mentioned in (the latter part of) the verse: "and He knows what is in the land and the sea; and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book", refers to the relative unseen since all these items are limited and measured that can be either comprehended by us or they could be hidden from us.

Then the verse says that these things are: "in a clear book": So, what is the status of these things that are in the clear book? Are these things in it in form of "the unseen" as well as "the seen" or only in form of "the unseen"? In other words, does the term "a clear book" refer to the world that consists of things that are never hidden from it (even though they be unseen to one another)? Or does it refer to a reality beyond this world in which these things have been recorded and preserved in it in a peculiar way that they are unseen to the people of this world and so whatever is in the book is the absolute unseen?

In still other words, the things that exist in the limited existence that have been mentioned in this verse, do they themselves exist in theclear book just as the letters exist in the books that are with us? Or do they exist in form of their names in it just as the physical items exist in meaning only when we write about them in the papers and the books, and the these words mirror the outside reality according to the absolute knowledge?

(The answer is the second of the two alternatives.) The Word of the Almighty: *No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own selves, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence...* (57:22), proves that the relationship of this book to the real events is like that of a book in which the program of the event is written down to the actual event. Closer to this are the following verses: *...and there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth orin the heaven, nor anything less than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book*, (10:61); *...not the weight of an atom becomes absent from Him, in the heavens or in the earth, and neither less than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book,* (34:3); *He said: "Then what is the state of the former generations?" He said: "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book: errs not my Lord, nor does He forget,"* (20:51–52); and other verses like it.

So: "a clear book", whatever may it be, is an entity different from the real things; it existed before the things and will remain after they perish just like the programs written for activities before their occurrence that remain recorded even after their occurrence.

Nonetheless, these entities and events in our world are variable and changing under the general law of movement whereas the verses state that there is no possibility of change or error in the contents ofthe Book. The Almighty says: *Allah erases what He pleases and establishes* (likewise)*, and with Him is the basis of the Book,* (13:39). *In a guarded tablet,* (85:22). *...and with Us is a writing that preserves* (50:4). As you can see, the verses prove that this book, while containingall details of events and persons that are variable and changing, does not itself change nor does any variation and error reach it.

Thus, it becomes clear from this that "the Book" that is with the Almighty God is separate from "the keys of the unseen" and the treasures of things. God has described the keys and the treasures as being beyond measure and limit, and that the limits and measures come upon those things when they descend from the treasures of the unseen to this world that is the level of visibility. Also, He has described that this book contains the details of the perimeters of these things and events. So, from that perspective: "a clear book" would be different from "the treasures of the unseen" that are with God and, in reality, it is creation of God that precisely records the other creations and preserves them after their descent from the treasures of the unseen and before they reach to the stage of (physical) materialization and also after their materialization and demise.

It also proves that the Almighty God mentioned this book in this verse

to describe the encompassing nature of His knowledge about the items and events that occur in the world no matter whether they were unseen for us or visible. As for "the absolute unseen" that no one but the Almighty can know, that has been described by Him as being in "His treasures"; and "the keys of the unseen" that He possesses, no one knows that except Him. However, some verses indicate that while it is possible for others to know what is in "the book", no one can know what is in "the treasures." For example: *In a book that is hidden; none do touch it save the purified ones,* (56:78–79).

So, there is nothing in the creation of God but that it has its origin in "the treasures of the unseen" from which it is sustained; and there is nothing in what God has created but that "the clear book" contains it before its (physical) existence, at the time of its existence, and after it perishes. However, "the clear book" is a degree lower in status than "the treasures." An intelligent observer can discern that "the clear book", even though it is simply a book, is not like the parchments and material papers; the material scrolls—whatever their size and their quality—are incapable of recording its own history let alone the perpetual history of other items.

From this discussion, two points become clear:

Firstly, the meaning of "the keys of unseen" is the Divine treasures that contains things before it branches out into mould of measures, and it contains the unseen status of everything as declared in the following verse: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure,* (15:21).

Secondly, the term "a clear book" refers to its relationship to all things like the relationship of a book that contains program of action to the action itself; therein is a kind of measure for things except that the Book exists before the things, with them and after them; and it contains the knowledge of the Almighty about things, a knowledge which has no room for error or omission. That is why it is sometimes surmised that "a clear book" refers to the real status of things and their physical materialization (which is immune to any change) since nothing is subject to change except after its existence; and that is the meaning of the idiom: "verily once an entity is created it does not change."

In short, this book contains everything that happens in the world of creation and invention—whatever happened in the past, whatever is happening now, and whatever will happen in the future without any doubt. However, it also contains things that are in the realm of limits and measures, and scrolls

and books that allow change and alteration, and accept the process of erasing and reinstating as stated in God's words: *Allah erases what He pleases and establishes* (*likewise*)*, and with Him is the basis of the Book*; (13:39). The erasing and confirming especially when it is contrasted with the basis of the Book—happens in the Book.[1]

Thus, the connection of the verse: *And with Him are the keys of the unseen* with the previous verses becomes clear. The conclusion of the two previous verses was that: 'what you are demanding of me for the decisive sign between us is not within my power, neither is the final judgement with me, instead it is in the knowledge and power of my Lord; if it were in my power, the matter would have been decisively settled between us, and the chastisement would have seized you, that it does not seize anyone but the unjust ones since God knows that you are, indeed, the unjust ones; because He is the Knowledgeable Who is not ignorant of anything. Hence, there is no way to know and control what He intends and decides eventually because

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1 The discussion on the Knowledge of God in this verse may be summarized as follows:
First, we have "*Mafātīḥu al-ghayb*—The Treasures of the Unseen or the Keys of the Unseen."
i) This refers to the exclusive Knowledge of God that is not accessible to anyone but Him.
ii) Things in The Treasures of the Unseen have an abstract existence and are beyond the realm of limits and measures.
Since these things are beyond the realm of limits and measures, they are unseen in relation to the human beings.
Ghayb or unseen can be absolute (*muṭlaq*) or relative (*nisbī*).
Then at a slightly lower level, we have "*al-Kitābu al-Mubīn*—The Clear Book."
i) It contains the records of every person, thing and event from the time they existed in "The Treasures of the Unseen" to the time they emerge onto the physical realmand until they perish.
ii) *al-Kitābu al-Mubīn* contains what is known as "*Ummu al-Kitāb*—The Basis of the Book" that is also known as "*Lawḥ Maḥfūz*—The Guarded Tablet" and itscontents are immune from any change or alteration.
iii) It also contains "*Lawḥ Maḥw wa Ithbāt*—The Tablet of Erasure and Reaffirmation." This refers to the partial knowledge that God gives to some angels and prophets which is changeable from their perspective.
iv) While "The Treasures of the Unseen" is exclusively for God, "The Clear Book" is accessible to chosen humans depending on the will and permission of God. (Trans.)

the keys of the unseen are with Him, none knows them but He; and He best knows the unjust ones and does not confuse them with others since He knows what is in the land and the sea, and knows every minute and grand thing, and everything is in the clear book.'

So, His Word: "and with Him are the keys of the unseen" refers to the absolute unseen to which none other than Him has access. The statement "no one knows them" is a circumstantial phrase and it proves that the keys of the unseen is from category of knowledge, however it is unlike the knowledge with which we are familiar. What naturally comes to our minds about the meaning of 'knowledge' refers to the images that have been derived from things after they come to exist and can be measured by their perimeters while "the keys of unseen"—as mentioned earlier—refers to knowledge of things (in their abstract form) that have not yet come to (physical) materialization and cannot be measured by their physical perimeters. In other words, the unlimited knowledge not influenced by anything.

And His Word: "and He knows what is in the land and the sea" show the expansive bounds of His knowledge that can be comprehended by others, both those items that are sometimes visible to some people as well as those that are invisible to some others. 'the land' has been mentioned first because it is more known to the people who are being addressed.

And His Word: "and there falls not a leaf but He knows it" specifically talks about leaves since it is difficult for a human being to know about them because of the excessively great quantity of the leaves on the trees and that makes it impossible for a person to distinguish them one from the other or to monitor them all together with the variance in their state ending in falling off and decaying.

Also, His Word: "nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book" is contextually connected to the term "a leaf." The expression "the darkness of the earth" refers to its dark depths that contain the grains, some of which grow while others perish. So, the meaning of the verse would be: 'no grain falls in the dark depths of the earth nor do anything green nor dry—whatever it may be—falls on it but God knows it.' Based on this, the words "but (it is all) in a clear book" replaces the expression "but that He knows it"; and implication of its missing syntactical part is the following: "but that it is found written in the clear book."

The adjective of the book as *al-mubīn* (clear) could have two meanings:

If it is in the meaning of 'the clarifying book', then it is so because it clarifies for its reader everything in its true form without allowing any shadow of change, alteration, and concealment in its description. If it is in the meaning of 'the clear book', then it is so because the book is in essence of a written entity and the written entity is recited, and if it is clear without any concealment or ambiguity, then the Book is also the same.

وَهُوَ الَّذِى يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ
لِيُقْضَىٰٓ أَجَلٌ مُسَمًّى ۖ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

(6:60) And He it is Who takes your souls at night (in sleep), and He knows what you acquire in the day then He raises you up therein that an appointed term may be fulfilled; then to Him is your return, then He will inform you of what you were doing.

al-Tawaffā means to take something in full; and God uses it in His statements in the meaning of taking the living soul the way it happens at time of death as He has said in the next verse: *...until when death comesto one of you, Our messengers* (that is, angels) *cause him to die...* (6:61)

al-Tawaffā is also used in meaning of putting one to sleep just as it is used in meaning of causing death as seen in: *Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep...* (39:42), since both actions are similar in preventing the soul from its function on the body (partially in case of sleep and fully in case of death).

Similarly, the term *al-ba'th* is used in meaning of awaking someone from sleep as it is used in meaning of raising someone after death both reconnect the soul's function on the body (partially in theformer and fully in the latter).

And qualifying *al-tawaffā* with 'at night' and *al-ba'th* with "during the day" is based on what happens normally since people are asleep at night and awake during the day.

So, the word "*yatawaffākum*—He takes your souls in full" proves that the soul is the complete essence of a human being which is reflected by the term 'I' and not like what we sometimes are made to think that the soul is one of the two parts of a human being and not its complete being or that it is a form or a quality accidental to him. A clearer verse in this matter is 32:10–11: *And they say: "What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall*

we then indeed be in a new creation?" Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely, then to your Lord you shall be brought back." The astonishment of the unbelievers was based on their assumption that the essence of a human being is the body which perishes and decays when its limbs disintegrate because of death and so it is 'lost' in the earth. Hence the answer is based on the view that a human's essence is the soul (the spirit), and when the angel of death takes the soul in full and secures it, nothing of it is lost.

...and He knows what you acquire in the day: ("*Jaraḥtum*—you acquire" is from) *al-jarḥ* that refers to the action done by the limb, and it means whatever a person acquires. The sentence means that God knows what you have acquired (of deeds) in the day. It is better to consider *wa* (and) and the sentence following it as a circumstantial phrase (and not a conjunction) of the earlier active verb. (So, the sentence should then start with: "while He knows what you acquire in the day.") Consequently, the sentence "then He raises you up therein" connects with "He it is Who takes your souls" without any interruption of an irrelevant statement in between since the two verses intend to explain the Divine design about human life in this world, at time of death and after it until he is returned to his Lord.

The main purpose of the two narrative sentences is to explain the meaning of the Almighty's Word: "And He it is Who takes your souls at night (in sleep) while He knows what you acquire in the day, then He raises you up therein—in the day—in order to fulfill an appointed term... and He sends keepers over you until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers take him completely, and they are not remiss. And then they are returned to God, their True Master." This is the actual intent of this statement, and everything else is of secondary status. In short, the meaning is that He it is Who takes your souls at night (in sleep) while He knows what you acquire in the day, then He raises you again up in the day.

... then He raises you up therein that an appointed term may be fulfilled; then to Him is your return, then He will inform you of what you were doing: Awakening someone or making someone alert has been described by the word *ba'th* in order to contrast it with the word *tawaffā* used for putting someone to sleep. The purpose of *ba'th*/awakening is to complete the appointed term (of death), a time known to God that cannot be missed by the worldly life of a human, as He has said: *...so when their term comes they shall not remain behind* (*even*) *an hour, nor shall they go before* (7:34).

Fulfillment of the appointed term is justification (for awakening) because the Almighty is Swift in reckoning, and had it not been for the previously determined term, He would have surely seized them for their deeds and evil consequences of their sins. He said: *And they did not become divided until after the knowledge had come to them out of rivalry among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly judgment would have been decided between them...* (42:14); the previous determined term can be seen in God's Word in the story of Adam's descent: "*and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.*" (7:24).

So, the meaning of the verse is that verily God takes your souls at the night and although He knows what you have earned of evil deeds during the day, He does not hold back your souls (to finalize your death) rather He awakens you during the day after taking your souls so that your determined time (of death) be fulfilled; and with death and resurrection, you shall return to Him who will inform you of what you were doing.

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِۦ ۖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا جَآءَ أَحَدَكُمُ
الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

(6:61) And He is the Supreme, above His servants and He sends keepers over you; until when death comes to one of you, Our Messengers take him completely, and they are not remiss.

Some discussion on this sentence has passed in the commentary of the 17th verse of this chapter.

Expressing the process of sending the keepers without any qualifying term and linking it to the time of death is not without indication that the role of these keepers is to protect the human from every calamity that he faces, every misery that follows him, and every tribulation that approaches him. After all, our life in this world is a life of interaction and competition in which everything is affected by rivalry with others from all directions because every part of this physical world is occupied with seeking perfection and increasing its share of existence. Moreover, nothing can increase in its share except that it diminishes an equal share from something else; so things are constantly in state of struggle and domination. Thus, part of this world is the human being whose physical constitution is the most delicate of existing constitutions and the most elegant of what we know; and his

rivals in nature are numerous and his enemies in life are more dangerous. Therefore, God has sent to him the angels as protectors from a variety of calamities, impacts of disasters and misfortunes; and they constantly protect him from death until when his determined term (of death) comes, they leave him to his tribulations which will eventually cause his death as it has been mentioned in the *aḥādīth*.

As for the verse where the Almighty says: *And most surely there are keepers over you, honourable recorders, they know what you do,* (82:10–12), the word 'keepers' refers to those angels who record the deeds. However, some exegetes have taken the verses under discussion as a commentary of this verse. Even though this verse does not totally discount that interpretation but the words: "until when death comes to one of you" support the earlier interpretation.

Our messengers take him completely, and they are not remiss: Apparently, the meaning of 'remiss' is negligence and carelessness in implementing the Divine Command of causing death. Almighty God, however, has declared the angels as those who do what they are commanded to do. And He has also said that every nation is tied to its (determined) term, and when their term comes, they will not remain behind even for a moment nor shall they die before it. The angels assigned to the task of taking the soul fully do not fall short of the necessary limit that are clearly delineated for them about the death of a given person at a given time in such-and-such conditions; and so they do not neglect, even for a moment, in taking the soul of a person whose death has been assigned to them and so they do not remiss.

Are these angels (assigned to cause death) the same as those who were mentioned earlier as keepers? The verse is silent on this matter although there is a remote indication about their being the same. However, these angels assigned to cause death (to whatever category they may belong) are indeed helpers of the Angel of Death as the Almighty has said: *Say:* "*The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely, then to your Lord you shall be brought back.*" (32:11).

Relating the action of taking the soul to these angels and then to the Angel of Death in the verse mentioned above and further more to the Almighty God as in the verse: *Allah takes completely the souls at the time of death...* (39:42)—is kind of a variety in the levels of reference. To God ends everything and He is the Master Who is absolutely free in whatever He does; and the Angel of Death is connected (to the Almighty) in his function of taking the souls with his helpers who are functionaries of the task and his

means and tools.

This is just like the line that is drawn by a pen behind which is a hand (which holds and moves it) and behind them both is the person who is writing.

ثُمَّ رُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقِّ ۚ أَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحَاسِبِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(6:62) Then are they sent back to Allah, their Master, the True One; now surely His is the judgment and He is swiftest in taking account.

The verse refers to their return to the Almighty God through resurrection after death. His description as: "their Master, the True One" indicates that He is the cause of all the functions mentioned earlier such as putting to sleep awakening, maintaining (their lives), causing death, and bringing about resurrection. It also has analysis of the concept of mastership and then proof of the right of mastership for Him: the master is one who owns the slave, and among his rights is to act about him as he wills. Since the Almighty has the real ownership and He is the One who brought about creation, management, and resurrection, then He is the True Master for Whom is established the meaning of mastership in a way that it can never be diminished ever.

... now surely His is the judgment and He is swiftest intaking account: Since the Almighty has explained the exclusivity of the treasures of the unseen to Himself, His knowledge about the clear book that contains everything, and His management of the affairs of His creatures from the time they came to exist until their return to Him, He now explains that the judgement belongs to Him and not to anyone else. As He has mentioned earlier: *the judgment is only Allah's*, He now announces the conclusion of His statement by saying: "now surely His is the judgment" in order to draw their attention to what they have ignored.

That is, His Word: "and He is swiftest in taking account" is another conclusion of the previous statement. He clarifies that He does not delay the reckoning of people's deeds from its appropriate time; rather He delays whenever He delays in order to fulfill the term that has beendetermined for it.

قُلْ مَنْ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْ ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً لَئِنْ أَنْجَانَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

(6:63) Say: "Who is it that delivers you from (the dread of) darkness

> of the land and the sea (when) you pray to Him (openly) humiliating yourselves, and secretly: 'If He delivers us from this, certainly we shall be of the grateful ones.' "

"Deliverance from the dread of darkness of the land and the sea" means to rescue from the difficulties that a person faces while travelling on the land or in the sea such as severe cold, rain, snow, storm, robbers, etc. This becomes more difficult for a person in darkness of the night or the clouds or the winds that cause swirling dust—all this elevates a person's anxiety, hopelessness, and disorientation in finding ways to prevent it. That is why deliverance has been linked to (levels of) darkness.

The actual question was about who delivers the human from the difficulties that he faces in his travels in the land and the sea. Then the difficulties were linked to the land and the sea since they denote the space; and then the darkness was linked to the land and the sea because darkness has a definite impact in intensifying these difficulties. Finally, 'the difficulties' was replaced by 'the (levels of) darkness' and deliverance was linked to it: "delivers you from darkness of the land and the sea." Even though the Almighty God delivers people from all distress and sadness as He has mentioned in the next verse, the term darkness has been specifically mentioned because hardship, discomfort and calamity are normally associated, in human's mind, with the journey on the land and in the sea.

al-Taḍarru' means openly expressing humiliation (that is, humbleness and submission) as mentioned by al-Rāghib (in his *al-Mufradāt*); and therefore it has been contrasted with "*al-khufyah*—secretly" (that is, privately and covertly). Openly expressing humiliation and secrecy in prayer refers to asking openly and secretly respectively. When someone faces a calamity, he begins praying secretly and in whispers; but when the calamity becomes severe, and signs of hopelessness and being cut off from the safety appear, then he does not care whether the people around him will see his humility and imploring gesture—he prays openly in as well as in whispers.

Mentioning 'openly' and 'secretly' is an indication that the Almighty delivers people from the calamities of the land and the sea, the severe ones as well as the lighter ones.

And in His Word: "If He delivers us from this, certainly we shall be of the grateful ones" indicates that when a person prays under such a situation to be relieved from it, he adds a pledge and a promise to His Lord that if God relieves him from that situation he will surely be among the grateful

ones and will abandon his previous ungrateful state.

The origin of this promise is based on the norm prevailing among the people in their interaction with one another. When one of us becomes helpless and surrounded with a trial from a severe calamity or poverty or an enemy, he will seek help from someone whom he considers to be capable to remove that problem and promises him something that will please him and strengthen his determination and manliness. And that could be in form of a good praise or wealth or work or loyalty. This is based on the social interaction between us that all exist as interchange is done between two parties in which one gives something and takes something in return, since need is essential to a human in the sense that he does nothing but for sake of a benefit which will come in his way. Other creatures are also the same.

The Almighty God's status, however, is nobler than any need or any loss, and He does not do anything but that its benefit is for His creatures. That is why the concept of monotheism has been placed in contrast to the human being's promise of gratitude and obedience in his natural prayer. (In other words,) whenever a disaster falls upon a human being, and he is cut off from elements of safety and the means of rescue disappear, he comes to realize that indeed God, Glory be to Him, is the only entity capable of removing grief from him, and that He is the one who manages his affairs from the time He created him and He also manages every means (in the system of universe). It is then that he finds himself as unjust and transgressor in relation to God, Glory be to Him, not deserving the removal of grief and fulfillment of need by the Almighty because of the sins that he has accumulated and the consequences of evil deeds that he has earned. So, he promises his Lord to be grateful and obedient in order to improve his eligibility for acceptance of his prayer and deliverance from his calamity.

Thus, we see that when he is delivered from the calamity, he goes away forgetting the pledge he made with his Lord and the promise of being grateful, as God has said at the conclusion of the next verse: *yet again you associate* (*others*) *with Him*.

قُلِ اللَّهُ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

(6:64) Say: "Allah delivers you from them and from every distress, yet again you associate (others) with Him.

al-Rāghib in his *al-Mufradāt* said:

> "*al-Karb* means severe distress as the Almighty says: *And We delivered him and his family from a mighty distress.* (37:76). '*al-Kurbah* is similar (in meaning). Its origin is from (the idiom), '*karbu al-arḍ* in the meaning of digging the earth inside out so distress also arouses the anxiety inside a person. It is said that it could be from (the idiom): '*al-kirāb ʿala al-baqar*—ploughing is upon the cow.' And it is surely not from the saying, '*al-kilāb ʿala al-baqar*—(sending) the dogs upon the cattle' (an idiom that means creating chaos among people). It is also possible that *al-karb* is from (the idiom), *karabat al-shams* in the sense that the sun is about to set. The saying, '*ināu kurbān*—the container is about to fill up' (*kurbān*) means nearness like *qurbān*. It could be from *al-karab* and that means a strong knot in the rope of the bucket; it is said, '*Akrabt al-dalw*—I put a knot on the bucket.' Sometimes *al-gham* (anxiety) is described as a knot on the heart."

The expression *every distress* has been linked in this verse to: *the darkness of the land and the sea*, in order to encompass all humans since there is not a single human being who has not faced in his lifetime one or another kind of distress and anxiety; consequently, pleading and praying (for relief) is common among them whether they express it openly or secretly.

In short, the meaning of this verse is that when you are faced with difficulties in the darkness of the land and the sea, and are cut off from the normal means (of rescue) and are at the end of your wits, you come to realize, by reverting to your human nature, that the Almighty God is your Lord besides Whom there is no lord and you become absolutely certain that worshiping other than Him is unjust and sinful. The proof of this is that you pray to Him at that time openly with humiliation as well as secretly, and you promise Him to be grateful to Him thereafter and not to disbelieve in Him if He delivers you. But after being delivered, you break your pledge that you made with Him and you continue on your previous disbelief.

These two verses are arguments against the polytheists and rebuke for them on breaking the oath and not fulfilling the pledge.

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ
أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ ۗ انْظُرْ
كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

(6:65) Say: "He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet, or that He should throw you into confusion, (making you) of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of others." See how repeatedly We display the signs that they may understand.

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al-Rāghib in his *al-Mufradāt* says:

> "The origin of *al-ba'th* (to send) is raising up something and giving it a direction. It is said: '*ba'athtuhu fā'nba'atha*—I sent him and he was dispatched.' *al-Ba'th* differs in meaning depending on the difference in its point of reference. So '*ba'atht al-ba'īr*—I sent the camel' means I caused it to rise and move; whereas the Almighty's Word: *and* (*as to*) *the dead, God will raise them* (6:36), that is, He will raise them from death and make them move to the judgement... So, *al-ba'th* is of two kinds: (1) Human, such as in causing the camel torise and move and to send a person for a task. (2) Divine, which is of two types: (a) to create items, things and entities from nothing; and this is exclusively for the Almighty Creator and no one can do that. (b) To raise the dead back to life, and this power has been bestowed to some of His chosen ones such as Jesus and others like him."

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In short, in the term *al-ba'th*, there is kind of an indication of raising and lifting up someone or something. And with consideration, it is used for giving direction to and sending someone since giving direction towards a task and sending someone towards a nation normally only happens after calmness and immobility. Therefore, '*ba'th*—sending' of a chastisement has within itself an indication that the nature of chastisement is that it be directed towards the people and come upon them, and this necessary consequence is only prevented by a barrier such as belief and obedience to God. This discussion has a concludingpart that will come later on.

(On the term "*yalbisakum*—throw you into confusion," al-Ṭabrisī) says in *Majma' al-bayān*:

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> "(The expression:) 'I made the matter confused for them,' means when I did not clarify it and mixed some issues with the other... *al-Labs/al-lubs*) means confusing the issue and confusing the statement... *al-Shiya'* means the sects; each group is a sect by itself; *shī'ah* of so-and-so means his followers. *al-Tashayyu'* means following (someone) on basis of faith and love."

Based on this, the verse, *or that He should throw you into confusion* (*making you*) *of different parties*, means that to mix one with another and confuse them while they were groups and sects.

So, His Word: "Say: 'He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet,'" apparently means to prove God's ability for sending on them a chastisement from above or beneath them. To prove the capability to do something does not necessarily mean actually doing it; proving His capability of sending chastisement is sufficient to frighten and warn them. The context, however, indicates that the verse does not only want to prove the capability; rather it shows that they deserve this kind of chastisement; and that the chastisement itself demands that it be send upon them if they don't agree on faith in God and His revelation as we saw in the implication of the meaning of *al-ba'th*. This understanding is supported by the latter verse: For every prophecy is a term and you will come to know (it). This is a clear threat.

The Almighty God clearly threatens this nation with chastisement in other similar verses in the Qur'an such as: *And every nation had a messenger, so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice...* till: *And they ask you: "Is that true?" Say: "Aye! By my Lord! It is most surely the truth, and you will not escape;"* (10:47–53). *Surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord so worship Me. And they broke their religion* (into sects) *between them...* (21:92–97). *Then set your face upright for religion in natural devotion* (to truth)*... and be not of the polytheists, of those who divided their religion and became sects...* (30:30–45).

It has been said that the chastisement: "from above them" refers to the forms of chastisement like the cry, the stone, the flood and the wind as it was done to the people of ʿĀd, Thamūd, Shu'ayb and Lot; and: "from beneath their feet" refers to sinking into the ground as it was done to Qārūn (Korah).

It has also been said that the chastisement: "from above them" refers to the chastisement that will come to them from their elders and their tyrant rulers; and: "from beneath their feet" refers to the chastisement that will come to them from the lowly people and their evil slaves. It has been further said that the chastisement "from above them" and "from beneath them" refers to the deadly weapons and firearms that humans have lately invented such as the fighter-planes and tanks that discharge explosive and destructive bombs, etc., and underwater submarines that drown the ships and boats. So, the warning has occurred in this verse while He very well knows what

will happen in His Kingdom.

The truth is that the expression used in the verse can be applied to all these explanations mentioned above, and some similar chastisements that have been sent down after the revelation of this verse can be applied to the verse. The common cause for these events that has facilitated its path is the differences of opinion and divisions that appeared in the *ummah* and went contrary to the call of the Holy Prophet who used to call them to unity of the word of truth: This indeed is my straight path, so follow it, and *do not follow* (other) *ways, for they will separate you from His way...* (6:154).

... or that He should throw you into confusion, (***making you***) ***of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of others...:*** Apparently, it refers to the groupings that emerged after the Prophet and that led to appearance of various schools of thought that had acquired the flavour of partisanship and the fervor of *jāhiliyyah*; and this was followed by wars and battles in which each group allowed violation of all that was sacrosanct to the other and dismiss them, in their views, from the sanctity of the faith and the territory of Islam.

Therefore, the words: "or that He should throw you into confusion, (making you) of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of others" refer to one chastisement, not two chastisements even though it is possible, in a way, to consider the act of throwing them into confusion and the act of making them taste the infighting as separate chastisements. Division between the *ummah* has another evil consequence and that is creeping weakness, depleted power, and divided resources. However, if the expression, "make some of you taste..." is taken as an indication of separate chastisement then itwould be considered as a qualifying phrase to the general statement ("throw you into confusion"). However, placing a qualifying statementalongside a general statement is not appropriate except by extra emphasis in the speech. (Such an emphasis does not exist here) and the conjecture'And' support what we have said.

In conclusion, the verse means: Tell them, O the Messenger of God, and warn them about the consequence of their refusal to join together under the banner of Islam and to heed to the true call; andthat for their attitude, there is an evil consequence within the power of the Almighty God by which He can seize them by sending upon them a chastisement from which there will be no escape or refuge, andthat is the chastisement from above them or from beneath their feet, orHe can make some of them taste the fighting of others

by which they will end up becoming groups and sects, differing from one another in dispute with one another and at war against one another—thus they will taste the fighting of one another. Then God ends the statement by addressing the Holy Prophet: *See how repeatedly We display the signs that they may understand.* Its meaning is clear.

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وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ۚ قُلْ لَسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾

(6:66) And your people call it a lie and it is the very truth. Say: "I am not placed in charge of you."

The people of the Holy Prophet are the Quraysh or the tribe of Muḍar or the Arabs in general. The purport of some verses in other places is that the Holy Prophet's people are the Arabs: *And if We had revealed it to any of the non-Arabs so that he should have recited it to them, they would not have believed therein. Thus have We caused it to enter into the hearts of the guilty. They will not believe in it until they see the painful punishment. And it shall come to them all of a sudden, while they shall not perceive,* (26:198–202). *And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly...* (14:4).

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Anyway, God's statement: "And your people call it a lie and it is the very truth," serves as a justification for materialization of the news that was contained in the previous warning. As if it was said: O the *ummah*, get together in the monotheism of your Lord and get united in following the true word; otherwise there is no protector who can protect you from the chastisement that will come from above or from beneath or from the division and groupings that is followed by armed fight of one against the other. Then the Holy Prophet was addressed and it was said to him: Verily your people rejected that and so they deserve the evil chastisement or severe pain that they will taste.

It is clear, firstly, from this that the pronoun in "call it a lie" refers to the chastisement as al-Ālūsī has attributed this view to the majority of commentators. Sometimes it is said that it refers to the "repeatedly displaying of the signs" or to the Qur'an. However, this is far-fetched. It is not far-fetched to link the pronoun to the news that is contained in the previous verse.

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Secondly, based on the context, this news: "And your people call it a lie and it is the very truth" is the first news that prepares the ground for the threat of chastisement. It is as if someone says: It is necessary for your people to unite on believing in God and His signs and to be vigilant and watchful

against getting into rejection of God and His signs; and against creating differences among themselves so that the chastisement of God, Glory be to Him, does not come upon them. Then it is said: Your people—among your entire *ummah* and those who are of your contemporary or from the people who came after you—quickly moved to violate what they were obliged to confirm and they belied the news (of chastisement) so they werediscredited because of this and they shall soon know. Moreover, that those who rejected the Holy Prophet or the Qur'an or this chastisement are not only the Arabs who are his people, rather he was rejected also by the Jews and other communities of his era as well as those who came after him. Their rejection and their division altogetherhad a positive impact in the warning given about the chastisement. So,specifically relating the rejection to his people even though others werepart of this rejection proves what we have said earlier.

An analytical discussion on the psyche of the Islamic societysupports the conclusion that we have derived from the verse: The decaying psyche of the present Muslim *ummah,* the lack in its strength and its dissolving unity can be traced upon analysis to the differences and disputes of the early days after the Holy Prophet's demise; and that can be linked to the events of the early days of the *hijrah* and (even) before it to what the Prophet faced from his own tribe and how they boldly defied him by rejecting and ridiculing his thoughts.

Even though these people gathered around the banner of Islam and sought the protection under its shadow after the faith prevailed (in the society) and its lamp was illuminated, the noble religious society was not free from the ill of hypocrisy as many verses of the Qur'an have confirmed it. The number of the hypocrites was not insignificant and itwas impossible for the society to be safe from their evil impact on its psyche, and it could not absorb them fully in order to transform them into good members of the society during the Holy Prophet's lifetime, and their embers did not take long to be reignited and increase its inflammation as it continues even now. After all, everything returns back to its origin and there are all kinds of game in the belly of the wild ass.

Thirdly, God's statement: "Say: 'I am not placed in charge of you'," is an indirect statement which says to ignore them and say to them: 'I am not responsible for your actions nor am I liable (for them) so that I should prevent you from rejecting (the message) out of concern for you. The only duty that I have as a Messenger is to warn you about a severe punishment

which is hidden from you.' This also clarifies that His statement: *For every prophecy is a term, and you will come to know* (*it*), is part of the Holy Prophet's speech to his people as the words "you will come to know (it)" supports this interpretation. The people are addressed by the Holy Prophet's speech and not by the Almighty God.

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لِكُلِّ نَبَإٍ مُسْتَقَرٌّ ۚ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(6:67) For every prophecy is a term and you will come to know (it).

This is a clear threat and warning of an event that will imminently occur. The correctness of referring the warning to the polytheists (of Mecca) is obvious by the previous discussion since the roots of divisions and problems that the Muslim *ummah* is to face can be traced back to them. After all, people are one community; its latter generations are affected by what happens to the earlier ones, the defects that appear in the latter ones can be connected to the first ones, no matter whether they realize that or not or they see that or not. The Almighty God says: *Nay, they are in doubt, the sport. Therefore keep waiting for the day when the heaven shall bring a clear drought that shall overtake men; this is a painful punishment. Our Lord! Remove from us the punishment; surely we are believers. How shall they be reminded, and there came to them an Apostle making clear* (*the truth*)*, yet they turned their backs on him and said: "One taught* (*by others*)*, a madman." Surely We will remove the punishment a little,* (*but*) *you will surely return* (*to evil*), (44:9–15).

Reflect on the verses how God seized the latter communities because of the crimes of their predecessors. Are not they in the same category as verses quoted earlier from the chapters: Yūnus (10:47–56), al-Anbiyā (21:92–97), al-Rūm (30:30–45)? There are many verses in the Noble Qur'an that talk about the evil consequences and ill fortunes that will overtake the *ummah* followed by the Divine Favor (of forgiveness and blessings). The worst negligence committed by our commentators (of the Qur'an) is in matter of reflection on these blessed verses in spite of their numerousness, importance and strong connection to the status and good fortune of the *ummah* in this world and the hereafter.

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ وَإِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرَىٰ مَعَ

الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

(6:68) And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse, and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people.

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al-Rāghib, in his *al-Mufradāt*, says:

> "*al-Khawḍ* means to enter the water and pass through it; then it was borrowed for other actions. It has mostly occurred in the Qur'an in meaning of entering into something blameworthy."

It means entering into vain talks and engaging deeply into it; for example, quoting the true Qur'anic verses, and then ridiculing them and being insolent about them.

"Withdraw from them" means not to participate with them in what they are engaged in by standing up and moving away from them or something like it that will demonstrate non-participation. The phrase: "until they enter into some other discourse" is a conditional clause which proves that the prohibition of being in their company and sitting with them is not general, covering even a right purpose; the prohibition is only for sitting with them while they are deeply engrossed in the Divine verses (for the purpose of ridiculing them).

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It is clear, therefore, that there is kind of an ellipsis. So in the statement: "and when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse," there is an implied sentence which is omitted because it is not required. And so the meaning—and God knows better—is as follows: 'And when you see the people who engage in and ridicule God's verses continue in their engagement of and ridiculing the Divine verses, withdraw from them and do not sit in their circle until they engage in other discourse. So, when they enter into other discourse, then nothing prevents you from sitting with them.' Although the verse came in the context of the argument against the polytheists, but the criterion mentioned therein is of a general nature and so it covers others equally.

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At the end of the verse, God says: "...then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people." Engaging negatively in God's verses is injustice; and the verse prohibits from participating with the unjust people in their injustice. In a similar verse, the Almighty says: ...*surely then you would be*

like them... (4:140)

So, it becomes clear that the verse does not command to withdraw from those who engage negatively in Almighty God's verses; rather it commands to withdraw from them as long as they are engaged negatively in Divine verses.

The pronoun *hu* in *ghayruhu* (some other) refers to the discourse in which they engage negatively in Divine verses since it is a negative engagement that has been forbidden.

... and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people: The letter *mā* in (*wa imma yunsiyannaka*) is superfluous and denotes a kind of emphasis or reduction; and the letter *nūn* (in *yunsiyannaka*) is for emphasis and its origin form was *wa-in yunsika*. The statement consists of emphasis and intensified pronunciation for prohibition; in other words, 'even if you forgot Our prohibition because the Satan made you to forget it and then you remembered it, so do not be neglectful of it and don't lose time in withdrawing from them since those who fear displeasing God should in no way participate with those who negatively engage in the Divine verses, ridiculing them.'

Although the verse addresses the Holy Prophet, the intended addressee is the *ummah*. In the discussion on infallibility of the Prophets we had negated occurrence of such kind of forgetfulness, the forgetfulness of the Divine Law (by the prophets would amount to) neglecting it and that in turn could be used as an argument against them and a justification for the opponents.

This is supported by the statement after the verse addressing the pious among the *ummah*: *And nothing of the reckoning of their* (*deeds*) *shall be upon those who guard* (*against evil*), *but* (*theirs*) *is only to remind, haply they may guard.*

More clearer proof for this is in God's statement in Sūrah al-Nisā': *And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse; surely then you would be like them; surely Allah will gather together the hypocrites and the unbelievers all in Hell*; (4:140). The reference in this Medinan verse about what: He has revealed to you in the Book is to the verse of Sūrah al-An'ām under discussion and not any other verse. And the command revealed previously was addressed to the believers; and so it follows that although the verse: *And when you see those who engage in vain discourses...* is addressed to the Holy Prophet, it actually is intended for someone else—as the saying goes: "Although I address you but I would

like the neighbor to hear me."

وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَٰكِنْ ذِكْرَىٰ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(6:69) And nothing of the reckoning of their (deeds) shall be upon those who guard (against evil), but (theirs) is only to remind, haply they may guard.

It means that the sin of those who engage negatively (in Divine verses) will not be carried by anyone but themselves and it will not affect others unless the others also act like them and participate with them in the sin or be pleased with their sin. Indeed, no one will be held accountable for an act except the doer. But we remind them haply they may guard themselves against evil. (Why?) Because a person may attend their gathering and even though it is possible for him not to indulge in their negative engagement (with Divine verses) nor is he pleased in his heart with their act and it is also possible for him that he does not consider his participation in their gathering as a way of support for their sin or their statement but just the fact of witnessing a transgression and seeing a sin desensitizes his heart about the sinful act and minimizes the mistakes in his views—and when the seriousness of a sin is minimized, it is likely that he will fall for it because the hearts are inclined to sins. Thus, it is incumbent upon a righteous person (who possesses piety and exercises precaution in prohibited things by God) to refrain from mixing with those who ridicule and show insolence towards God just as it is incumbent upon those who are in company of the ones who engage negatively in God's verses to do the same so that he is not desensitized to insolence towards God and His verses, and ends up committing that sin and putting himself on the verge of perdition. Whoever hovers around the fire is likely to fall into it.

From this explanation, it becomes clear, first of all, that it is only the pious who have been separated from the accountability of those who engage negatively (in Divine verses)—even though others (in principle) do not share the punishment of the sinners' deeds—in order to emphasize the point that one who participates in their gatherings and sits with them is not immune from sharing in the punishment of their sins. So, the implied missing part in the statement would be as follows: Those who don't engage negatively

will not be responsible in any way as long as they safeguard themselves from such engagement with them; but yet We prohibit them from sitting with them so that they may continue their refrain from such engagement or so that they may enhance their piety and sensitivity regarding prohibitions given by God, Glory be to Him.

Secondly, the meaning of *taqwā* in the verse: "and nothing of the reckoning of their (deeds) shall be upon those who guard (against evil)" is the general *taqwā*, that is, refraining and staying away from whatever displeases God, the Sublime. And in the verse: *haply they may guard* the *taqwā* refers to the specific sin of engaging negatively in the verses of God. It could also be that the *taqwā* in the first verse refers to the basic level of *taqwā* but in the second it refers to its perfect form; or the first one could be the general *taqwā* while the second could be its expanded form which is applied to a given situation such as the act of engaging negatively in God's verses. Yet there is another explanation also: the first one could be the *taqwā* addressed to the believers and the second one could be the *taqwā* addressed to those who are engaging negatively; and in this case the implied statement would be: 'give an advice to those who engage negatively so that they may refrain from such engagement.'

Thirdly, the term *dhikrā* (to remind) is an unconditional object for an implied verb. The implied (verb) is: 'but We counsel them by that reminder' or 'counsel them of the reminder'. Or *dhikrā* could be a predicate of an omitted subject and so the implied subject would be: 'but this command is a reminder'. Or it could be a subject for an omitted predicate and so the implied meaning would be: 'it is your duty to counsel them'. The second of these variations seems closer to the mind.

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَنْ
تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ وَإِنْ
تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۖ لَهُمْ
شَرَابٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

(6:70) And leave those who have taken their religion for a play and an idle sport, and whom this world's life has deceived, and remind (them) thereby lest a soul should be fettered with what it has earned; it shall not have besides Allah any guardian nor an intercessor, and

if it should seek to give every compensation, it shall not be accepted from it; these are they who shall be fettered with what they earned; they shall have a drink of boiling water and a painful chastisement because they disbelieved.

al-Rāghib says:

al-Baṣl means contracting something or separating it. Because of its meaning of contraction, it has been borrowed for 'scowling face;' and so it is said: 'He is *bāṣil*, fearless' and '*mubtaṣilu al-wajh*, courageous face'. And because of its meaning of separating, *baṣl* is used to describe something forbidden or mortgaged such as in God's Word: *and remind* (*them*) *thereby lest a soul should be fettered with what it has earned*; which means it will be deprived from the reward. The difference between *al-ḥarām* and *al-baṣl* is that the former is general in the sense something that is forbidden by law and by force whereas the latter refers to something forbidden by force only such as in His Word: *these are they who shall be fettered with what they earned*; which means they are deprived of the reward.

(al-Ṭabarsī) in *Majma' al-bayān* says:

"It is said: *Abṣaltuhu bi jarīratihi* (I surrendered him (to you)). *al-Mustabṣil* means the one who surrenders himself since he knows that he has no way to escape. al-Akhfash said: 'The word *tublaṣa* (in the verse under discussion) means you will be punished. And it is said that *tublaṣa* means to be mortgaged. These meanings are close (in their import).' "

And leave those who have taken their religion for a play and an idle sport...: Adhering to their evil desires has been described (in this verse) as a play and a sport with their religion. This sentence presupposes a true faith for them, a faith towards which their pure nature calls them; and it was incumbent upon them to adhere to it seriously and to protect it from confusion and change, but they took it as a play and a sport, altering it from one state to another and changing it from one form to another according to the dictates of their evil desires.

The above sentence was followed by the words: "and whom this world's life has deceived," because of the close connection between the two, since settling down comfortably in earnestly acquiring and indulging in the enjoyments of this materialistic life compels one to abandon the true faith and to consider it as a play and a sport.

Then God said: "and remind (them) thereby", that is, counsel them "by the Qur'an" so that a person would not be fettered to the transgressions that he has committed, or so that a person is not surrendered for accountability and punishment on account of what he had committed. Hence, such a person has no master and no intercessor other than God; and no weight (of gold) nor any kind of redemption will be accepted on that day, because that day is the day of compensation for the deeds, not the day of buying and selling. These are the ones who shall be fettered to what they had earned or will be prevented from God's reward or will be surrendered for their punishment; they shall have a drink of boiling water and a painful chastisement because of their disbelief.

قُلْ أَنَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ لَهُ أَصْحَابٌ يَدْعُونَهُ إِلَى الْهُدَى ائْتِنَا ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۖ وَأُمِرْنَا لِنُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

(6:71) Say: "Shall we call on that besides Allah, which does not benefit us nor harm us and shall we be returned back on our heels after Allah has guided us, like him whom the Shayāṭīn have made to fall down perplexed in the earth? He has companions who call him to the right way, (saying): 'Come to us.' " Say: "Surely the Guidance of Allah, which is the (true) guidance, and we are commanded to that we should submit to the Lord of the worlds.

This is an argument against the polytheists in form of a rhetorical question; and only two of the qualities of their idols—inability to benefit and inability to harm—have been mentioned here because taking someone or something as god is based on one of the two reasons: hope (of something) or fear (of something); and if the idols neither benefit nor harm us, then there is no impetus to pray to them, worship them or seeking closeness to them.

... and shall we be returned back on our heels after Allah has guided us, like him whom the Shayāṭīn have made to fall down perplexed in the earth? He has companions who call him to the rightway, (*saying*)*: 'Come to us.'* *al-Istihwā* means fulfilling the desire and falling down; and *al-rad 'ala al-a'qab* (turning back on heels) means straying from the right path and

abandoning true guidance. True guidance indeed ends in finding the straight path and treading upon it whereas 'turning back on heels' means not treading the path and turning back, and that is indeed misguidance. That is why the verse says: "and shall we be returned back on our heels after God has guided us," qualifying the 'return' occurring after the Divine guidance. It is indeed strange to see that some people have taken the argument of this verse: "and shall we be returned back on our heels after God has guided us," and other similar verses such as the statement of Jethro (Shu'ayb), as quoted by the Almighty God: *The chiefs, those who were proud from among his people, said: "We will most certainly turn you out, O Shu'ayb, and* (*also*) *those who believe with you, from our town, or you shall come back to our faith." He said: What! Though we dislike* (*it*)*? Indeed we shall have forged a lie against Allah if we go back to your religion after Allah had delivered us from it, and it befits us not that we should go back to it, except if Allah our Lord please...*" (7:88–89).

They have argued thereby that the Prophets, peace be upon them, before being raised as Prophets and donning the mantle of prophethood, were on the path of *kufr* (disbelief) because of the words 'returning on the heels after God has guided us,' and 'back to your religion after God had delivered us from it' that they have taken as proofs that the Prophets were followers of *kufr* before being delivered from it.

This is a false argument. These words and expressions are used by the prophets in the language of the religious society whose members were idol-worshipers until God guided them through their prophets. We don't mean to say that since majority of the people were polytheists before therefore it is valid to relate their previous disbelief to all members of the society including their prophets—God's true statement cannot be such. Rather we mean that it is okay to say about a religious society—that includes the prophet and his community—which its members were delivered from shirk after being guided by the Almighty God; without Him, there will be nothing but misguidance. As for the community, they were on polytheism in the period before they were guided to the true faith (through the prophets); as for their prophets, they were always guided by God and they, without the (constant) Divine guidance, would have faced nothing but misguidance. (The emphasis here is that) if it had not been for the Divine guidance, they would have faced nothing for themselves except misguidance since other so-called gods don't possess any loss or benefit for themselves. So, it is appropriate to say about them that there is no basis for them to return on the heels after God has

guided them or to return to polytheism after God has delivered them from it.

In short, the statement (that they were polytheists before being believers) is applicable to them in the true sense even though some members of their society—such as their Prophets—were not disbelievers before the prophethood. Faith and guidance was with them in all situations from the Almighty God—if they had been left by themselves (without God's guidance), there would be nothing but misguidance as you already know. And you also know from various past discussions on the infallibility of the Prophets that the Noble Qur'an has clearly stated the purity of their persons from the smallest of minor sins, let alone the major ones, especially the most serious of the major ones and that is shirk, ascribing a partner to Almighty God. And His Word: "like him whom the Shayāṭīn have made to fall down perplexed in the earth?" This is the portrayal of a perplexed person who lacks insight in his affairs and strong determination in seeking his felicity; and so he abandons the best and the upright path towards his goal which has been treaded by the rightly-guided companions of him. So, now he is confused between the Satan (and his agents) who invite him towards misguidance and perdition on the one hand and his rightly-guided companions—who have reached to their stations and attained the goal—who invites him towards the guidance saying: 'come to us.' He doesn't know what to do; he is between those who are pulling him down and those who are pulling him up!

Say: "Surely the Guidance of Allah, which is the (*true*) *guidance, and we are commanded to that we should submit to the Lord of the worlds:* If the choice is between the call of God, Glory be to Him, which is according to the human nature, the *fiṭrah*, which is known as 'God's guidance,' and between the call of the Satan (and his agents) which is based on evil desires and taking the faith as a play and an idle sport, then God's guidance is, indeed, the only true guidance.

What accompanies the call of *fitrah* is God's guidance; and there is no doubt in it because the true guidance is also proclaimed by the creation and invention that is from God only. And we don't wish for any religion or belief except to seek the truth, and there is no truth but with God and so His guidance is never devoid of truth. The fact that God's guidance is the true guidance which should be adopted and not the satanic call is obvious because all our affairs reside with God: our origin, our final destination as well as our needs of this world and the Hereafter.

... and we are commanded that we should submit to the Lord of the

worlds: (al-Ṭabrisī) says in *Majma' al-bayān:*

> "The Arabs say: *Amartuka li taf'al* or *Amartuka an taf'al* or *Amartuka bi'an taf'al* (all meaning: I commanded you so that you may do it). So, *Amartuka bi'an taf'al* has the proposition letter *bā* and the meaning would be: the command is applied to this act. In the format *Amartuka an taf'al* the proposition letter has been deleted. Whereas *Amartuka li taf'al* simply means: I commanded you for the act. al-Zajjāj (referring to the words in the verse) says: 'It means: "We are commanded so that we should submit." "

The sentence: "and we are commanded that we should submit" is an explicative appositive for: "surely the Guidance of God, which is the (true) guidance", the command to submit is the application of God's guidance. So, the meaning is: 'God has commanded us to submit to Him' and the active subject of this verbal clause (that is, 'God') has been kept vague in order to facilitate the clause 'to the Lord of the worlds' thus replacing the pronoun 'Him'. This explains the reason for the command: We have been commanded by the revelation to submit to God because He is the Lord of the worlds altogether—there is no other god or gods for all the worlds or for some of them (as believed by the dualists).

'Submitting' in this verse apparently means submitting all affairs to the Almighty and not just uttering the two testimonies of faith; and that is the apparent means of His Word: *Surely the religion with Allah is Islam* (3:19), as mentioned earlier.

وَأَنْ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ۚ وَهُوَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

(6:72) And that you should keep up prayer and be careful of (your duty to) Him; and He it is to Whom you shall be gathered.

This displays skilful coherence of the speech wherein the command (in the previous verse) has been taken in the sense of the statement and follows the same course. As if it is said: 'We have been told to submit to the Lord of the worlds and to keep up prayer and be careful of Him.' The verse has summarized the detailed religious duties in the term: "and be careful of (your duty to) Him." It has, however, specifically singled out, from all the duties, the daily prayers by name in order to emphasize its importance and honour its status; the importance that the Noble Qur'an has given to the daily prayer is no doubt obvious.

... and He it is to Whom you shall be gathered: It is obligatory to submit to Him and to be careful of Him because the return of humans is to Him and reckoning and compensation is in His hands.

وَهُوَ الَّذِی خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۚ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِی الصُّورِ ۚ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾

(6:73) And He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth with truth; and on the day He says: "Be", it is. His word is the truth and His is the Kingdom on the day when the trumpet shall be blown; the Knower of the unseen and the seen; and He is the Wise, the Aware:

A number of names and qualities of Almighty have been mentioned here in order to clarify and justify what has been said previously. The Almighty has mentioned that the true guidance belongs to Him; and that was further explained by submitting to Him, praying to Him and being careful of Him—that is indeed the entirety of the faith. Then He explained the reason why His guidance is the true guidance that cannot be ignored: all will be gathered to Him. He further gives the full explanation by His Word: "And He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth..." These names and qualities are such that even if one of those were missing, the statement would not have been complete.

And His Word: "And He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth with truth", means that the entire creation is His work and that He had done it on basis of truth, not falsehood; and if the work is not based on falsehood, then it must have a purpose and there is a purpose to creation—to return to the Almighty (for reckoning and compensation). This is one of the two arguments that the Almighty has mentioned in these words: *And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve...* (38:27). So, creating the heavens and the earth on basis of truth leads to the point that the creation will be gathered to Him (on resurrection). And His Word: "and on the day He says: 'Be', it is." The context shows that the objective of the statement 'Be' is the Day of Resurrection even though it could be applied to every existing creation as the Almighty says: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that*

He says to it, "Be," and it is, (36:82). So, 'the day' is an adverb denoting time connected to 'Be'; and the meaning is: The day He says to the Day of Resurrection, 'Be' and it will be. It is also said that the objective of the statement 'Be' is the thing (as in example of 36:82), then it comes to exist. However, what we have mentioned is closer to the context.

And His Word: "His word is the truth" This is a justification for the preceding sentence that is why it appears as a separate sentence. *al-Ḥaqq* (the truth) means something that exists in the real sense of existence, an external existence (as opposed to a mental existence in the mind only). If God's word is His action and creation (as stated in "and on the day He says, 'Be', it is"), so His word is the truth itself, and therefore none can oppose or change His Word: He said: *The truth then* (*it*) *is and the truth do I speak,* (38:84).

And His Word: "and His is the Kingdom on the day when the trumpet shall be blown;" This refers to the Day of Resurrection as He (*Allah*) has said: (*Of*) *the day when they shall come forth...* (40:16). The meaning of the phrase: "His is the Kingdom on the day of trumpet" even though the kingdom belongs to Him at all times—is its manifestation when all means of support will disappear and all relationships and family ties will be cut off. Some segment of this theme has occurred in previous discussions and more discussions on it and on the meaning of the trumpet will come in its appropriate place, God willing.

His, the Sublime's Word: "the Knower of the unseen and the seen; and He is the Wise, the Aware." Its meaning has occurred in the past; and it is a name of the Almighty that incorporates the process of reckoning and compensation. Similarly, the two names: the Wise, the Aware. So, God, by His knowledge of the seen and the unseen, knows everything inside out; neither is its outward dimension hidden from Him because of its appearance nor is its interior because of its being inside. By His Wisdom, He perfectly manages the process of creation, and separates the necessary compensation as required so that He does not do injustice or deal blindly (with the people). By His awareness, neither a small entity escapes His attention because of its minuteness or a great entity because of its greatness.

These names and attributes perfectly clarify that all the people will be gathered to Him; and that His guidance is the true guidance; and that the religion of *fiṭrah* that He has ordered us to follow is the true faith. So, the Almighty has created the universe for a specific purpose: it should return to Him; and when He wants it to return, He shall say to it 'Be', and it will come

to existence because His Word is the truth that no one can oppose. It will be clearly manifest on that day that the kingdom belongs to Him and nothing has any power on anything. On that day, on basis of wisdom and awareness, He will separate those who obeyed Him from those who disobeyed because He knows every unseen and seen reality.

The conclusions of the above discussion are as follows:

Firstly, the meaning of "with truth" is that the creation of the heavens and the earth was with truth in the sense that 'truth' is its quality. The discussion on the meaning that God's actions and statements are with truth just passed above. So, the opinion expressed by some that the verse means 'He created the heavens and the world with a true word' is far-fetched. ("Truth" in this verse is the attribute of the God's action, that is, creation; and not of His word.)

Secondly, the apparent meaning of: "and on the day He says, 'Be', it is", based on the context, refers to the command for bringing about the Day of Resurrection even though the command 'Be' is commonly used for creation of all things.

Thirdly, the purpose of specifically mentioning the blowing of the trumpet (out of the various signs of resurrection) in: "on the day when the trumpet shall be blown", is to emphasize the general nature of the gathering that ties in with the preceding verse: *and He it is to Whom you shall be gathered. al-Ḥashr* (the gathering) refers to the resurrection of the people and marshalling them all together in a state of confusion. The trumpet is normally blown to gather the soldiers of a barrack for an important matter; similarly, the trumpet will be blown (that is, the second trumpet on the Day of Resurrection) in order to gather the people at the place of assembly for judgement. *So this day no soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least; and you shall not be rewarded aught but which you did*, (36:54).

The term 'day' has occurred twice in this verse but in different meanings: the first instance is in form of an adverb denoting general time such as the time for the Resurrection Day, as we would say: 'the day when God created the movement' and 'the moment when God created the days and the nights'. Here 'the day' is part of the movement, depending on it, and 'the moment' is the day and the night. The second instance is in the meaning of the Day of Resurrection itself.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Suyūṭī, in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, under the verse: *He separates the truth...* (6:57) says that al-Dārquṭnī, in *al-Ifrād*, and Ibn Marduwayh have quoted from Ubay b. Kaʿb who said: "The Holy Prophet recited it for a person as *yaquṣṣu*: He separates the truth and He is the best of separators (between truth and falsehood)." (That is, as it has occurred in the common recitation of the Qur'an.)

(2) He also quoted under the verse: *And with Him are the keys of the unseen—none knows them but He...* (6:59), that Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī, Ḥashīsh b. Aṣram in *al-Istiqāmah*; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn ʿUmar that the Messenger of God said: "The keys of the unseen are five, none knows them but God: no one knows what will happen tomorrow except God; no one knows when the wombs will let go their burden except God; no one knows when the rain will come except God; no soul knows in what land will it die except God; and no one knows when the Hour (of Doom) will come except the Almighty God." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: If this narration is authentic, it should not be considered as contrary to the general import of the verse since numbers are not to be taken literally. All the examples mentioned in the narration can be summarized in one category of future events; and there are other applications of the unseen other than these five as proven in the verse itself.

(3) al-Suyūṭī also says that al-Khaṭīb has quoted in his *al-Tārīkh* a narration from Ibn ʿUmar, through a weak chain (of narrators) that the Messenger of God said: "There is not a grain on the face of the earth or a fruit on the trees but on it is written: 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful; this is the sustenance of so-and-so.' And that is the meaning of the Sublime's Word: *and therefalls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything green or dry but* (it is all) *in a clear book.*" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: Besides the weakness in its chain of narrators, the content of this narration does not properly fit the verse.

(4) al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr* narrates from Abu al-Rabīʿ al-Shāmī who said: "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) about the Word of God: *and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of*

the earth, or anything green or dry but (*it is all*) *in a clear book.*" He said: "The leaf refers to the miscarriage, the grain refers to a child, the darkness of the earth refers to the wombs, and green refers to the child who will be born while dry refers to the miscarried (foetus). And all of that is in a clear book."

Author's comment: This has also been narrated by al-Kulaynī and al-Ṣadūq from Abu al-Rabīʿ, and by al-Qummī without a *sanad.* This narration does not fit with the apparent meaning of the verse.[1] There is a similar narration quoted by al-ʿAyyāshī from al-Ḥusayn b. Saʿīd from Abu al-Ḥasan.

(5) al-Ṭabrisī in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* (under verse 6:65) says: "The verse *Say: 'He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you...'* means the tyrant rulers; and: *'...or from beneath your feet...'* means the evil slaves and one who has no goodness in him. This has been narrated from Abu ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq)."
Then he said: "As for the verse: *...or that He should throw you into confusion,* (making you) *of different parties...*, it has been said that it means to put one against the other by placing enmity and prejudice among them; and this has been narrated from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq)." Then he said: "As for statement: *...and make some of you taste the fighting of others*, it has been said that it refers to bad neighbors; and that has been narrated from al-Ṣādiq as well."

(6) al-Qummī in his *al-Tafsīr* (under the verse 6:65) says: "The verse: *...He should send on you a chastisement from above you...*, means the tyrant ruler; and: *...or from beneath your feet...*, means the low class and those in whom there is no goodness; and: *...or that He should throw you into confusion,* (*making you*) *of different parties...*, refers to tribal prejudice; and: *...and make some of you taste the fighting of others*, refers to bad neighbors."

(7) al-Qummī says: "In the narration of Abu al-Jārūd who quotes Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) saying about the His Word: '*He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you*, means the smoke and sky from the heaven; and: *or from beneath your feet,* means the sinking of the ground; and: *or that He should throw you into confusion,* (making you) *of different parties;* refers to difference

1 Nonetheless, this narration can easily qualify as the esoteric interpretation of the verse. (Trans.)

in religion and mutual accusation among the Muslims; and: *and make some of you taste the fighting of others*, refers to some of you killing the others. All this is related to the people of the *qiblah* (the Muslim *ummah*) as God says: *See how repeatedly We display the signs that they may understand.*'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

(8) Also, in *al-Durr al-manthūr* ʿAbdu al-Razzāq, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād in al-Fitan, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥibbān, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt* narrated from Jābir b. ʿAbdillāh who said: "When this verse: *He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you*, was revealed, the Messenger of God said: 'I take refuge by Thy Honour!' ...*or from beneath your feet,* he said: 'I take refuge by Thy Honour!' ...*or that He should throw you into confusion,* (making you) *of different parties; and make some of you taste the fighting of others*. He said: 'This is lighter' or 'easier.' " (al-Suyūtī)

Author's comment: Also, similar to this (ḥadīth) has been quotedby Ibn Marduwayh from Jābir.

(9) al-Suyūṭī says that Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ḥassanah, Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād in *al-Fitan,* Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Marduwayh have quoted from Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ a statement from the Holy Prophet about this verse: *Say:* "*He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet*," The Holy Prophet said: "This is surely going to happen, and itsinterpretation has yet to come." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: There are many narrations from the Sunnī sources as well as from the Shīʿī sources from the Imāms of Ahlu al-Bayt which say that the punishment that God has threatened from above them and from beneath their feet refers to the cry from the heaven and the sinking of the land that will happen to this *ummah.* As for throwing them into confusion, dividing them in groups and makingthem taste the atrocities of one another, these have already occurred.

(10) al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-manthūr* and Ibn Kathīr in his *al-Tafsīr* have narrated many reports showing that when the verse: *Say:* "*He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement from above you or from beneath your feet, or that He should throw you into confusion,* (*making you*) *of different parties; and make some of you taste the*

> *fighting of others.*" See how repeatedly We display the signs that they may understand; was revealed, the Holy Prophet sought refuge with his Lord and prayed that He would not punish his *ummah* with a variety of punishments. His Lord responded positively in case of some punishments but not in case of other punishments: throwing them into confusion and thereby dividing them into groups, and making them taste the fighting of one another.

Author's comment: These narrations, in spite of their numbers and a mixture of strong and weak chains of narrators, are all feeble because they go against the apparent meaning of the verse. Indeed the two verses following the verse under discussion: And your people call it a lie and it is the very truth. *Say:* "*I am not placed in charge of you. For every prophecy is a term, and you will come to know* (*it*)," (6:66–67) are explicit warning about occurrence (of the chastisement); moreover, these verses from sūrah of al-Anʿām were revealed all together and God, the Sublime, commanded His Prophet to convey them to his *ummah*. If there had been any change in form of lifting the chastisement, then it was imperative to see that in His revelation, that cannot be affected by falsehood from any direction; and we don't see any trace of such a change, instead what we see is contrary to that as seen in the discussion above that many verses from the Holy Qur'an support these verses in their message such as the ones in the sūrahs of: Yūnus, Rūm, etc. Furthermore, these narrations contradict many other narrations from both the Sunnī and Shīʿī sources demonstrating the occurrence of the chastisement on the *ummah* in future.

In addition to this, these narrations (quoted by al-Suyūṭī and Ibn Kathīr), in spite of their numbers and agreement that the Holy Prophet prayed after revelation of verse: *Say:* "*He has the power that He should send on you a chastisement...*", they are not united in the number of (items in the prayer): some say that there were three while others say that there were four; nor are they united in the number of cases that God accepted for him: some say one while others say two. They also disagree in the category of the items: some say that it was a plea about protection from stones raining from the sky, sinking into the earth, being divided into groups and fighting against one another while some say that it was for protection against drowning into the sea, drought and infighting among the *ummah*. Still, others say it was for protection against wide-spread drought, being overpowered by a foreign enemy and infighting among the Muslims. In some it says that the

subjects of the prayer was that the *ummah* would not unite on misguidance and that a foreign enemy would not overpower them and that He would not destroy them by drought and protect them from division and infighting. Still other narrations say that the plea was for not being overpowered by others and that He would not destroy them by drowning and would not make them fight one another. In some narrations, it says that the plea was that God would not destroy the *ummah* by means of chastisement used to destroy the previous nations; He would not impose others over them, would not make them divided and not make them fight one another. Some narrations say that he (Prophet) pleaded that the *ummah* be protected from the chastisement from their above and from beneath their feet and from being divided and from infighting.

Finally, many of these narrations say that the Holy Prophet prayed while he was in Ḥurrah of Banū Muʿāwiyah, a village from the villages of the Anṣār, in the northern part of Medina. This means that the prayer was made after the *hijrah* while we know that sūrah of al-Anʿām is a chapter that was revealed in Mecca, all together, before the *hijrah*! And there are many other differences inthe narrations which are obvious for anyone who looks into them.

If it is necessary for me to take something from these narrations, then I will choose what was narrated by ʿAbdu al-Razzāq, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Marduwayh from Shadād b. Aws who has narrated a *marfuʿ* ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet who said: "Verily God contracted the earth for me until I was able to see its easts as well as its wests, and (I came to realize that) my *ummah* will reach to the areas that had been contracted for me; and that I was gifted with two treasures: 'red' and 'white'. I prayed to my Lord not to destroy my people by a general drought, or confuse them in sects, or make them taste the violence of one another. He (God) said: 'O Muḥammad, once I decree something, it cannot be changed and I, hereby, grant you, for your *ummah*, that I will not destroy them by a general drought and I will not impose on them an enemy besides them to destroy them until they destroy and kill one another and take one another as prisoners.' The Holy Prophet said: 'I fear for my *ummah* the misguiding leaders; when the sword is unleashed in my *ummah* (against one another), it will not be relieved from them until the Day of Resurrection.'"

This narration and its content are free from most of the objections raised above, and there is no indication that this prayer was after the revelation

of the verse (under discussion). It should, however, betaken in the meaning of the total destruction and widespread drought that would obliterate the *ummah;* otherwise, the droughts, disasters and bloodshed that the *ummah* has faced in wars imposed by the Mongols, the Crusaders and (the Christians) in Spain and other places cannot be denied. It should also be said that this prayer and plea was in the early days of Islam before this sūrah was revealed. The Holy Prophet, after all, is well-aware of the status of his Lord and is on a high status himself to ask his Lord to change His decree after having received these verses and being ordered to convey them and to warn his *ummah* about it.

After lengthy discussion, the verses of the Noble Qur'an prove that it is engulfed by the truth; and the truth is that this religion of Islam is to stay till the Day of Resurrection and that the *ummah* will not be totally annihilated, and the means by which God has tested the past nations will be used to test this *ummah* also in a completely identical manner without any difference and failure. Numerous narrations from the Holy Prophet and the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt, that are authentic and clear, confirm this truth.

(11) al-Suyūṭī says: "In his *al-nāsikh,* al-Naḥḥās has quoted Ibn ʿAbbās regarding the verse: *Say: 'I am not placed in charge of you;'* (6:66), he said: 'This verse has abrogated the verse: *then slay the idolaters wherever you find them*, (9:5).' "

Author's comment: From our previous discussion, it is clear that the statement *Say:* "*I am not placed in charge of you;*" is an introductory context for the warning which occurs in the next verse: *For every prophecy is a term, and you will come to know* (*it*), (6:67). A statement such as this cannot be abrogated (since it is not a command, but a prediction).

(12) In the discussion on verse: *And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs...* (6:68), al-Qummī quotes ʿAbd al-Aʿlā' b. Aʿyan through his chain of narrators that the Messenger of God said: "Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, he should not sit in a gathering wherein an Imām is being insulted or a Muslim is being slandered because verily God says in His Book that: *And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse, and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people.*" (*al-Tafsīr*)

(13) al-Suyūṭī quotes from ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr and Abū Nuʿaym in

his al-Ḥilyah from Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) who said: "Do not sit with the argumentative people since they are the ones who negatively engage in God's verses." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(14) al-Suyūṭī quotes from ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd and Ibn Mundhir from Muḥammad b. ʿAli (al-Bāqir) who said: "Verily the dissenters are those who negatively engage in God's verses." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(15) al-ʿAyyāshī quotes from Rubʿī b. ʿAbdillāh from someone whom he mentioned from Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) about the Word of God: *And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs...* He said: "(Engaging in vain discourses about Our signs, means) to dispute about God and to argue about the Qur'an." And about: *withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse*, he said: "The story-teller." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: As you can see, these narrations are broader than the content of the verse, and it's actually applying the criterion on similar examples.

(16) al-Ṭabrisī quotes Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) who said: "When the verse: *then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people, was sent down*, the Muslims said: 'What should we do? Whenever the polytheists would ridicule the Qur'an, we used to get up and leave them; we stopped entering the Sacred Mosque and doing the circumambulation of the Sacred House.' So, God revealed: *And nothing of the reckoning of their* (*deeds*) *shall be upon those who guard* (*against evil*), *but* (*theirs*) *is only to remind, haply they may guard*; (6:69), commanding them to counsel them as much as they could." (*Majmaʿ al-bayān*)

Author's comment: As you can see, this narration has taken the word 'reminding' as a general passive particle and has related the pronouns in 'haply they may guard' to the polytheists thus implying the following meaning: 'but remind them the reminder, haply they may guard themselves.' A problem still exists since the sūrah was revealed altogether while the narration talks of a specific incident regarding this verse.

(17) al-Suyūṭī narrates from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Abu al-Shaykh from Ibn Jarīj who said that the polytheists used to sit with the Holy Prophet wishing to listen from him. But once they had heard (the verses), they used to ridicule them. Therefore, the verse: *And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our signs,*

withdraw from them..., was revealed. He said: "Whenever they used to ridicule, he would stand up and go away. Some of them realized this and said: 'Don't ridicule since he goes away.' This is reflected in the words: *haply they may guard* against negatively engaging in the Qur'anic verses and he would consequently stand up. Then the verse: *And nothing of the reckoning of their* (*deeds*) *shall be upon those who guard* (*against evil*)*,*' was revealed so that you would sit with them but you shouldn't sit. Then this verse was abrogated in Medina by the verse: *And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse. Surely then you would be like them* (4:140). This verse abrogated the verse 6:69." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: If the verse: *and indeed He has revealed to you...* (4:140) which is identical in meaning to: *when you see those who engage in vain discourses*, abrogates the verse: *and nothing of the reckoning of their* (*deeds*) *shall be upon those who guard* (*against evil*), then the verse: *and nothing of the reckoning of their* (*deeds*) *shall be upon those who guard* (*against evil*), abrogates the verse: *when you see those who engage in vain discourses*. This is not compatible with the fact that this sūrah was revealed altogether.

Moreover, the meanings of the three verses (6:68; 6:69; 4:140) do not have any conflict so that the second could abrogate the first and then be abrogated by the third one. This is obvious.

(18) Similar to this narration is another one which al-Suyūṭī quotes from al-Naḥḥās in his *al-nāsikh* from Ibn ʿAbbās about verse: *And nothing of the reckoning of their* (*deeds*) *shall be upon those who guard* (*against evil*), who said: "This is a Meccan verse that was abrogated in Medina by the verse: *And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and...* (4:140), (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(19) Sayyid Hāshim, under the verse: *His word is the truth and His is the Kingdom...*, quotes from Ibn Bābawayh, through his chain of narrators, from Thaʿlabah b. Maymūn from his companions from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) about the Word of God: *the Knower of the unseen and the seen*, that he said: "The Knower of 'the unseen' means of what is not yet existing, and 'the seen' means what is already existing." (*Tafsīr al-burhān*)

Author's comment: This ḥadīth mentions the most known examples of the unseen and the seen in our world. In the previous discussion under the verse and in other places, it was mentioned that there are other examples of the unseen also.

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Verses 74–83

These are ten verses in which the Almighty God mentions the arguments that He had granted to the great Prophet Abraham against polytheists thereby guiding him towards His Unity and pure concept of Divinity. Then He mentions the guidance that He provided to His prophets by purifying their nature from polytheism; among them He has named Noah, who was before Abraham, and sixteen prophets from the descendants of Noah.

In reality, these verses are elucidation for a perfect example of living by the religion of nature (*fitrah*) and standing up for spreading the belief of monotheism and purifying the concept of divinity from polytheism and idolatry; that is the faith for which Abraham stood up and defended against idolatry when the whole world was seemingly engulfed by it and had forgotten the path of monotheism that Noah and the prophets from among his descendants had introduced to the human society. These verses—consisting of arguments and guidance towards the religion of nature (*fitrah*)—are like further reflection upon the arguments that passed earlier in this chapter that Almighty God has taught to His Prophet by His Word like "Say this" and "Say that." The word "Say" has occurred in this noble chapter forty times, about twenty times before these verses. It seems as if it said: in what you say to your people and present to them the arguments of monotheism and rejection of polytheism that We have taught you, remember what Abraham said to his father and his people of what We had given to him of Our arguments against his people based on what We showed him of the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. Abraham used to argue against them on basis of Divine blessings of knowledge, wisdom and demonstration of His Kingdom based on conviction and not on fabricated idea founded on imagination and concoction that is rejected by the voice of the pure nature.

If we ponder on the tone of Abraham in what God, the Sublime has quoted of him in these verses with minds that are free of the details seen in the narrations and history with their obvious contradictions, and that are untainted by disputes put forth by the commentators of the Qur'an who have contaminated their exegeses with the narrations, historical tales, stores from the Old Testament and other materials that become popular

from Israelites. In short, such a reflection will clearly show that Abraham's tone in these verses was a speech emanating from a pure mind, void of the variety of ideas and imaginations, put in form of words by his pure nature which was in its initial stages of intellection and reflection and had subtlety of consciousness and feelings.

An unbiased observer who reflects on these verses will not doubt that Abraham's statement with his people was closest to the speech of a primitive and simple human being who lived in an underground tunnel or a cave in the mountain; who did not associate with people except for obtaining the necessary food and clothing; who had not surveyed the sky with its stars and celestial bodies or the rising of the sun and the moon; who had not stayed in a highly populated society with its vast cities, divergence of ideas, differences of goals and objectives, and varieties of its religions and sects. Then by chance he happened to enter the organized societies and observed unusual issues unfamiliar to him such as the celestial bodies, vast land mass, groups of people busy in their jobs struggling to obtain their goals and objectives without being distracted by anyone whether moving or standing, worker or employer, servant or master, superior or subordinate, leader or follower, busy in work or devotedly worshiping God.

Whatever he saw bewildered him, whatever he observed over- whelmed him, and so he started asking his associates about everything that he saw, and whatever drew his attention that surprised him just like a child who observes the vastness of the sky with its shinning sun and moon, as well as the necklace of bright stars, and asks his mother: 'What are these things that I see that fills me with delight and amazement? Who has decorated them in the sky? Who has illuminated them? Who has made them?'

We, of course, don't doubt that the initial questions that this person asks about the reality of things that he observes and that surprise him are closer to his state of loneliness and isolation from the society; and that he is asking about the purposes and goals of these entities that cannot be answered through the senses only. A human being seeks answers regarding the unknown based on whatever initial information that he possesses; he does not discover the answer regarding the unknown but by means of the information that he already possesses. This is an obvious matter seen in simple-minded people such as children and Bedouins when they come face to face with things that they had not known or seen before, so they start inquiring about what they know briefly and asking about its reality, its origins and

its goals. The person in consideration here is the person of pure nature who had engaged in only simple means of survival and therefore his mind was not occupied the way the mind of a city dwelling person would be occupied who is surrounded by a variety and countless natural activities which does not relieve him even for a moment. The thoughts and mind of the person in consideration are untainted, and now he is surrounded with the celestial and earthly incidents whose natural causes are unknown to him. His mind, therefore, is more receptive in reaching (directly) to the cause that is superior to the natural causes—a conclusion to which a city dwelling person reaches after completing the survey of the natural causes for the incidents, that also if he has the time! Consequently, it was faster for the mind of the person in consideration to reach to the supreme cause when he saw the city-dwellers busy in adhering and worshiping Him.

A proof for what we have mentioned above can be found in what we observe: adherence to religious rituals and discussion about metaphysics is more prevalent and more important in Asia than compared to Europe; and in villages and small towns it has more prestige than compared to bigger cities, and on same basis between the bigger cities and mega cities. This is so because the more the society expands, its basic needs increase and its activities multiply manifolds which leaves no opportunity for a person to easily get in touch with his spirituality and focus on the issue of the origin and the end.

In short, when we survey the story of Abraham mentioned in these verses and similar ones in verses of chapters Maryam, al-Anbiyā', al-Ṣāffāt, etc. We find his situation in his arguments with his sire and his people to be similar to the situation of a simple person whom we find asking about the idols and disputing with the people about them, and talking about the stars, the moon and the sun—asking questions like one who was not familiar with what the people were doing, especially when it came to his own people who were worshiping idols. He says to his sire and his people: *When he said to his father and his people: "What are these images to whose worship you cleave?"* (21:52); *When he said to his father and his people: "What do you worship?" They said: "We worship idols, so we shall be their votaries." He said: "Do they hear you when you call? Or do they profit you or cause you harm?" They said: "Nay, we found our fathers doing so."* (26:70–74)

This is the statement of a person who had neither seen an idol nor observed an idolater worshiping an idol even though he was in the cradle of idolatry, Babylon of Chaldea, and lived among them for a time. So was

Abraham's expression, 'What are these images?' is a way of belittling the idols and an indication that he does not accord them the same place accorded to them by the people, and that he does not see any sacredness and virtue in them? It seems as if he does not know them the way Pharaoh talked to Moses when he said: "*And what is the Lord of the worlds?*" (26:23); or the way the polytheists of Meccan talked to the Prophet as the Almighty God has quoted: *And when those who disbelieve see you, they do not take you but for one to be scoffed at:* "*Is this he who speaks of your gods?*" *And they are deniers at the mention of the Beneficent God,* (21:36).

It seems far-fetched to think in that way since Abraham used nothing but the best of manners in his speech to his father Āzar. Even when his father shunned him and threatened him with stoning, Abraham said to him: "*Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me.*" (19:47)

It is far-fetched to believe that in the first discussion that Abraham had with his father, he would belittle the lofty status of his gods in abusing and insulting tone, and thus provoke his prejudice and idolatrous tendencies. Moreover, God, the Glorified, had forbidden in this religion, the pure religion of Abraham, to abuse the gods of the polytheists, so that it does not provoke them to respond to the Muslims in kind. The Almighty says: *And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allāḥ out of ignorance,* (6:108).

After having argued with his father, Āzar, and his people about the idols, Abraham focuses his attention on their lords: the star, the sun and the moon. When he saw the star, he said: "This is my Lord;" then he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my Lord;" but then he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord, this is bigger." These expressions also reflect the situation of a person who had neither seen the star nor the moon and the sun. His clearest form of argument is when he said about the sun: "This is my Lord, this is bigger." This seems to be the statement of someone who did not know anything about the sun or the moon or the star other than the fact that he saw the people humbling themselves towards them, worshiping them and giving offerings for them as the history of the Babylonians shows.

It is just like a situation when you observe a blurred human shape and do not know whether it is a man or a woman, you would ask: "Who is this?" You will then be told: "This is so-and-so woman or so-and-so man." And when you observe a blurred shape and you cannot discern whether it is a

human or an animal or a tree, you would ask: "What is that?" You will then be told: "This is Zayd or this is so-and-so woman or it is shape of such-and-such item." In these situations, you being ignorant of the reality will ask about the identity of the shape whether it is of an intelligent human or an animal or whether it is a male or a female based on what you can discern from the vague shape. But the person giving the answer, since he is aware of the reality, will respond according to the reality.

The appearance of Abraham's statement that: "This my Lord" and "This is my Lord, this is bigger", show that he did not know much about the sun other than the fact that it rises; and that it is bigger than the moon and the star; and that people refer to it for worship and rituals. Referring to this kind of (partial) knowledge by the expression "this—(*hadhā* in masculine form)" is no doubt appropriate. But the reality that the sun was the celestial body that manages the world by its light and facilitates the night and the light by its movement as discerned by our senses or that the moon or the star rise every night from the eastern horizon and set in the opposite horizon in the west—he did not know these realities as can be seen from his expressions. If he had known this, he would have said about sun: "This—(*hādhihi* in feminine form) is my Lord, this is bigger", or he would have said: "Surely she is my Lord, she is bigger." (Note: In Arabic language, 'sun' is a feminine noun; and so the appropriate indication to it should be *hadhihi* and not *hadhā*.) Abraham realized this fine point later on as can be seen in his argument with Nimrod when he said: "*So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it* (*you*) *from the west,*" (2:258). Referring to the sun in "bring it", he did not say *bihi* (being a masculine pronoun, rather he said *bihā* which is a feminine pronoun).

Similarly, when he (Abraham) said to his father and his people as quoted by God: "*What do you worship?*" *They said:* "*We worship idols, so we shall be their votaries.*" *He said:* "*Do they hear you when you call? Or do they profit you or cause you harm?*" *They said:* "*Nay, we found our fathers doing so;*" (26:70–74). Abraham started by asking about their gods by using the term "*mā*—what" (which is used for inanimate things rather than "*man*—who") since he had no knowledge about it other than the fact that it is an object. Then when they mentioned the idols (and they didn't believe that they had consciousness and will), they said: "so we shall be their votaries—*fa-naẓallu lahā*" with the feminine *hā*. When he heard from them about the idols (being considered as gods), then it became compelling to describe them

with the power to benefit, harm and hearing in response to those who call them, so now Abraham describes them with being with intelligence. But then in the story of smashing the idols, they said: "*Certainly you know that they do not speak,*" (21:65) in response to his question: "*...therefore ask them, if they can speak.*"—Abraham stripped them of the quality of intelligence and said: "*What! Do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you? Fie on you and on what you serve besides Allah; what! Do you not then understand?*" (21:66–67)

We cannot arbitrarily ignore these fine points and say that when Abraham used the masculine form *hadhā* in "This my Lord, this is bigger," he was referring to the celestial body (as a body and not necessarily to the sun) or to the aforementioned entity or that in his Syriac language, like most non-Arabic languages, feminine is not taken into consideration. This is just an arbitrary view. Moreover, when his talk with the king about the sun, he specifically said: "*So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it* (*you*) *from the west,*" (2:258), (in which he uses the feminine pronoun *hā*). If the Qur'an did not use the style of his own language in this case, then why did he say, "*This is my Lord, this is bigger*" (using the masculine form)?

The same question will come when Abraham asked his people about the idols: "*What are these images to whose worship you cleave?*" (21:52). And also in his prayer: "*...save me and my sons from worshipping idols. My Lord! Surely they have led many men astray...*" (14:35–36). (In both these cases, feminine pronouns have been used.)

Neither is it acceptable to say that Abraham used masculine form in the demonstrative pronoun for the sun in order to safeguard God's honour from the blemish of femininity or because the predicate has to follow the subject of the nominal clause which was masculine: "My Lord" (being the subject clause) and "bigger" (being the predicate). All this arbitrary interpretations have no proof to stand on. The details will follow later on.

In summary, these verses and other similar verses in which the Almighty God has described the arguments of Abraham to his father and his people on God's unity and negating partners from Him are statements that contextually prove that he previously lived in an environment away from that of his father and his people and was not familiar with what the people knew as far as details of the celestial bodies and social norms prevalent among them are concerned. And that it was during his early age of maturity and discernment that he left his isolation and joined his father and found idols with him; so

he inquired about their status and when he was informed about them, he argued against their divinity and put across a convincing proof. Then he argued with his people about the idols and silenced them.

Then he looked at their worshiping of a variety of idols from the stars, the moon and the sun, and he seemingly joined them in believing in them as gods, one after another: he monitored them continuously and whenever one of them would set, he would reject it and deny its divinity; then he would go to other body that they worshiped until that also would set in the day or the night as it is normal for the celestial bodies. Finally, he turned to the pure monotheism by saying: "*Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists;*" (6:79). It seems that he completed his arguments in two days and a night in between as we shall discuss soon, God willing.

Abraham was aware that the universe has a creator who brought forth the heavens and the earth, and that is God alone who has no partner in this matter. He was discussing whether the people, including himself, had a lord other than God, from His creation such as the sun, the moon etc., who provide for them, manage their affairs and are partners of God in His decisions or that there is no lord for them but the Almighty God alone with no partner?

In all these stages of discussions that Abraham covered, the Almighty God helped him and supported him by showing him the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and disposed his noble soul to the direction in which all things were related to the Almighty God in their creation and management. So, whenever he would look at a thing, he would see its connection to God, and His creation and management of it before even he sees itself and its effects. This is clear from His Word: *And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure;* (6:75), and later on in that passage: *And this was Our argument which we gave to Abraham against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing;* (6:83). *And certainly We gave to Abraham his rectitude before, and We knew him fully well* (21:51). Also, from Abraham's conversation to his father: "*O my father! Truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me; I will guide you on a right path;*" (19:43). That can also be seen in his arguments against King Nimrod who claimed divinity as was common for many of the tyrants in the past, and from that sprouted the idea of duality; and that his people had many gods and idols that they worshiped, including the major ones such as

the sun, the moon and the star (most probably the Venus) that the Noble Qur'an had mentioned.

This is the summary of what can be gleamed from the noble verses, and we shall discuss its contents in detail as much as we can, God willing.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً ۖ إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

(6:74) And (remember) when Abraham said to his sire, Azar: "Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error";

In the (canonical) seven recitations of the Qur'an, the last letter of Azar*a*—has the vowel point *faṭḥa* (denoting the sound *a*) and so it becomes explicative apposition or substantive apposition for *abīhi* (his sire). In some (non-canonical) recitation, the last letter of Azar*u* appears with the vowel point *ḍumma* (denoting the sound *u*), in which case it is indicative noun in the vocative form and would mean: "O Azar, do you take idols for gods." Yet another recitation starts with interrogative *ḥamza*: *a azra'a* followed by *azra'a* in subjective form as verbal noun of *azara*, *ya'ziru* in the meaning of support, and the it would mean: "And (remember) when Abraham said to his sire: 'Do you take the idols for gaining strength and support?' "

The commentators have differences of opinion on the first common as well as the second no canonical recitations on the word 'Azar': is it the proper name of Abraham's father or is it a nickname used for praise in the meaning of the supporter or for blame in the meaning of the lame or the crocked, etc. The reason of these differences is the number of narrations in which his name has occurred as 'Tāriḥ' or 'Tārikh' which is supported by the historical records, and even the present Old Testament says that Abraham was 'son of Tārikh.'

They also differ in their opinions about the meaning of the word *ab*: does it mean the father, or the uncle, or the maternal grandfather, or a person of rank and authority. The basis of these differences is also the difference in narrations: some of them indicate that he was his father and that Abraham will intercede on his behalf on the Day of Judgement but that his intercession will not be granted rather God will transform him into a smelly hyena and so Abraham will disassociate himself from him. Other narrations say

that he was not his father rather his father was a monotheist, not an idol worshiper, as is also indicated in narrations that the ancestors of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad were all monotheists, not polytheists, etc.

Even in other dimensions of Abraham's story, the commentators have differences to a strange degree to the extent that some examples, such as those seen in the Old Testament, strip him of his status of being God's friend, prophethood and messengership. They have stretched out these kinds of discussions until it ends in far-fetched conclusions that are outside the norms of the exegesis of the Qur'an as described by the holy verses about the purpose of pondering on them. Whoever wants to know about this may refer to the extensive commentaries, especially those on the pattern of exegesis based on the traditions.

What the reflections on the verses pertaining to the story of Abraham indicate is that his first point of contact with his people was with a person mentioned in the Qur'an as his father Azar, and that he urged him to abandon the idols and to follow the religion of monotheism so that he can guide him until when his father forsaken him and asked him to leave him alone: *And mention Abraham in the Book; surely he was a truthful* (*man*)*, a prophet. When he said to his father: "O my father! Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least. O my father! Truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me; I will guide you on a right path..." He said: "Do you dislike my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist I will certainly revile you, and leave me for a time."* (19:41–46). So, Abraham bade him farewell and promised to pray for his forgiveness, hoping to entice him to the faith, the true success and the guidance: He said: "*Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me; and I will withdraw from you and what you call on besides Allah, and I will call upon my Lord; may be I shall not remain unblessed in calling upon my Lord.*" (19:47–48). The second verse is the best indication that Abraham promised to pray for his forgiveness in this world and not that he will intercede on his behalf on the Day of Judgement even if he remained a disbeliever or on the condition that he didn't know about his disbelief.

Then the Almighty God narrated the fulfillment of Abraham'spromise and his prayer for forgiveness of his father: "*My Lord: Grant me wisdom and join me with the good ones. And make for me a truthfultongue* (goodly mention) *among posterity; and make me of the heirs ofthe garden of bliss; and forgive my father, for surely he is of thosewho have gone astray. And*

disgrace me not on the day when they are raised, the day on which neither property will avail, nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a submissive heart," (26:83–89). The words: *for surely he is of those who have gone astray;* clearly show that Abraham prayed for his father after his death or after separating from and abandoning him by the term '*is*'. The latter part of the verses indicate that Abraham's prayer was done only in order to fulfill the promise that he had made as he himself says: 'Forgive this misguided person on the day of resurrection,' then he describes the day of resurrection as the day when nothing will be of use (neither wealth norchildren) except the submissive heart.

The Almighty God has clarified this reality in His Word that are in form of justification: *And Abraham asking forgiveness for his sire was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him; most surely Abraham was very tender-hearted, forbearing,* (9:114). The context of the verse shows that this prayer was done by Abraham in this world so was the act of disassociating from him, not that he will pray for him and disassociate from him on the Day of Judgement. The context of the verse is the context of a general prohibitive command from which Abraham's prayer has been exempted by explaining that it was done in reality to fulfill his promise—there is no sense in exempting something that is going to take place in the future (for example on the Day of Judgment) from a legislative command given in this world and then talk about disassociation in the Hereafter.

In short, the Almighty describes the prayer of Abraham for his father and then his disassociation from him during the earlier stages of Abraham's era when he migrated to the holy land based on his plea for wisdom, for being included among the good-doers and for good descendents as seen in the verses above: "*My Lord: Grant me wisdom and join me with the good ones;*" (26:83). And also the verse which includes the act of disassociating from his father and his people: *Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham and those with him when they said to their people: "Surely we disassociate from you and from what you worship other than Allah; we renounce you, and enmity and hatred have appeared between us and you for ever until you believe in Allah alone"—but not in what Abraham said to his father: "I would certainly ask forgiveness for you, and I do not control for you aught from Allah,"* (60:4).

Then, the Almighty God mentions his intention to migrate to the holy land and his prayer for good descendents: *And they desired a war against*

him, but We brought them low. And he said: "Surely I go to my Lord; He will guide me: My Lord! Grant me of the good ones," (37:98–100). Then He talks about his travel to the holy land and granting of good children to him: *And they desired a war on him, but We made them the greatest losers. And We delivered him as well as Lot* (*removing them*) *to the land which We had blessed for all people. And We gave him Isaac, and Jacob as a father gift; and We made* (*them*) *good ones,* (21:70–72). "*And I will withdraw from you and what you call on besides Allah, and I will call upon my Lord; may be I shall not remain unblessed in calling upon my Lord." So when he withdrew from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We gave to him Isaac and Jacob, and each one of them We made a prophet,* (19:48–49).

Finally, the Almighty describes Abraham's last prayer in Mecca which had taken place towards the end of his life after his migration to the holy land, after his children were born, after he had settled Ishmael in Mecca, after the town was settled and the Ka'bah had been built—that is the last statement of Abraham quoted in the noble Qur'an: *And when Abraham said: "My Lord! Make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols...O our Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley uncultivable near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! That they may establish prayer ...Praise be to Allah, Who gave me in old age Ishmael and Isaac; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer...O our Lord, grant me protection and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning shall come to pass,"* (14:35–41).

The sequence of the verse and its context are the best indication that Abraham's father for whom he prayed in this verse is other than the person mentioned in the verse: "to his father, Azar." The verses clearly state that Abraham prayed for his forgiveness based on the promise that he made to him and then he disassociated from him when he found out that he was God's enemy. There is no sense in him repeating the prayer for someone from whom he has disassociated and sought refuge with his Lord. So " his father Azar" is not his real father for whom he prayed along with his mother in his last prayer.

A subtle proof in this last prayer of Abraham is the term *wālidayya* (my parents): the term *wālid* is not used but for the real father from whom one is born, whereas in the previous prayer "*and forgive my father, for surely he is of those who have gone astray;*" (26:86), and other verses where Azar has been mentioned, Abraham has used the term *ab* which can also be used for the grandfather, uncle and others. The Holy Qur'an contain examples

of this usage (of *ab* or its plural *ābā'*): *Or, were you witnesses when death approached Jacob, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We will worship your God and theGod of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, One God only, and to Him do we submit;"* (2:133). Abraham was the grandfather of Jacob, and Ishmael was his uncle, but were described as *ab*. Also,the verse where Joseph says, "*And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob...*" (12:38). Isaac was thegrandfather of Joseph, and Abraham was his great grandfather, but both were described as *ab*.

In conclusion, the Azar mentioned in the verse under discussion is not the real father of Abraham; rather he had certain qualifications that allowed the usage of *ab* (father) for him, and so Abraham addressed him by saying "O my father." Arabic language permits the usage of *ab* for the grandfather, the uncle, the stepfather, the guardian and every elder who commands authority. This extensive usage of the term *ab* is not confined to the Arabic language rather other languages also have similar kind of usage for the terms like mother, uncle, brother, sister, head, eye, mouth, hand, arm, finger, etc., which can be discerned by one who is familiar with the subtlety and the delicacy in comprehension and expression.

It is clear, firstly, that there is no need to get into the traditional, historical and literal discussions about the term *ab* and whether Azar is a proper name or a good or bad nickname or name of an idol. There is no need for any of this in understanding the meaning of this verse. Moreover, most of what exists on this subject is arbitrary views without any proof, disturbing the apparent meaning of the verse and its context by bringing in astonishing combinations that they mention for the sentence "*Azar: Do you take idols for gods?*" in the form of relocating the phrases or deleting them and adding in implied phrases.

Secondly, Abraham's real father is other than Azar but the Qur'an has not spelled out his name; it has indeed occurred in the traditions and is supported by what is seen in the Old Testament that his name is Tārikh.

One of the delusions of some commentators is that the Noble Qur'an while mentioning the history of the prophets and the nations and the stories of the past, ignores important points that are considered essential elements of the stories such as the date of the event, its location, and its geographical, social and political circumstances which were crucial in formation of the inner dynamics in occurrence of the events. From such points in the matter

under discussion are elements crucial in understanding this story, such as the information about the name of Abraham's father, his genealogy, the history of the era of his childhood, movement, call and migration. (But the Qur'an is silent about it.)

This is so, in their view, because the Qur'an in its stories has adopted the path guided by the art of true story-telling: the story-teller selects in his story every possible method that takes him to his goal and purpose in a good way and represents the objective in a full and mature form without putting extra efforts in distinguishing the true elements of the story from the defective ones. Therefore, in order to achieve its goal of guidance towards the success, it was okay for the Qur'an to adopt stories that were in circulation among the people or among the *Ahl al-Kitāb* of the Prophet's days even if their authenticity was not verified and lacked the crucial elements or was just an imaginary story (such as the story of Moses and the young lad or those who abandoned their cities in thousands in order to flee death, etc.)—the art of story-telling does not exclude anything of this category after the story-teller has determined that the story is the most eloquent means and the most easy method of reaching the goal.

This is, of course, incorrect. What has been mentioned about the art of story-telling is valid but it does not apply to the Qur'an because the Qur'an is not a book of history nor a page from the pages of the imaginary stories rather it is a glorious book which is protected from falsehood from all directions. It is definitely the speech of the Almighty God and He does not say anything but the truth. There is nothing after truth but misguidance; He does not use falsehood in order to promote the truth nor does He support guidance by means of misguidance. It is a book that guides to the truth and the right path; in it is a convincing proof for one who beholds it, and it is against him who forsakes it.

How can a scholar who researches for the purpose of the Qur'an believe that it contains wrong ideas or false stories or superstitions or fanaticism?

I don't mean to say that believing in God, His Messenger and what His Messenger has brought necessarily means that one should deny that the Qur'an contains anything falsehood or lie or superstitious—even though it is such; nor do I mean that every person with valid intelligence and sound thoughts should humble himself to the Qur'an by affirming its truth and denying every falsehood and misguidance from it through the means of knowledge that he has attained to understand it—even though the Qur'an

is such.

What I am actually saying is that the Qur'an itself claims that it is the Divine Speech, written for guiding the people to their real success, it guides by the truth and towards the truth; and therefore it is necessary for one who interprets such a book and looks for its purpose and message that he should consider it as truthful in its speech, factual in its reports and whatever it explains, or he should evaluate it on basis of its purposes and goals as a guide to the path which is free from falsehood, conveying the wayfarer to an immaculate destination.

How can it be that the goal is absolutely true yet falsehood creeps along its path which calls to that goal? How can an issue be the final word yet is considered as superstitious? How can it be that the statement or news is God's speech who knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth yet ignorance, stupidity, and error would advance towards it? Can light produce darkness or ignorance produce knowledge?

This is the only method that an interpreter is not allowed to ignore in exposition of the verses of the Holy Qur'an while he believes that it is the true speech which cannot be touched by falsehood, neither in its destination nor in its path.

As for the discussion where the Qur'an is true in its claim that it is God's speech and that it is absolutely true in its path as well as its goal or that what does the previous holy books (the Bible and Avesta) say about the Qur'an and its decisions or how does it relate to other historical or natural or mathematical or philosophical or social scholarly discourses? These and similar discussions are outside the realm of Qur'anic exegesis and it is not permissible to combine them with it.

Yes, God's statement: *Do they not then mediate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy;* (4:82), says that there are doubts and thoughts that come to the minds giving rise to the idea that the Qur'an has differences in the sense that one of its verse might seem to contradict another or that the contents of its verse might go against the truth and reality. If the Qur'an categorically states that it guides to the truth while its two verses contradict one another (in the sense that whatever is contained by one is the truth while the contents of the other one is not the truth), then the verse: *Do they not then mediate on the Qur'an?...* clearly states that some verses of the Qur'an are sufficient to dispel the ambiguity from other verses and that some of its verses clarify the

unclear concepts of other verses. A scholar searching for the meaning and message of the Qur'an must seek help of some verses in order to understand the others, cite some verses to comprehend the others, and make some verses speak about the others. The Holy Qur'an is a book of call and guidance that does not deviate from its path, even by a step; it is not a book of history or story; its purpose is not that of a historical study nor is its style of the art of story-telling; it does not intend to give the genealogies or the mechanism of time and space nor other details that would enrich a historical study or fictional story.

What is the religious benefit in giving the genealogy of Abraham: son of Tārikh (Terah), son of Nāḥūr (Nahor), son of Sarūj (Serug), son of Raʿau (Reu), son of Fālij (Peleg), son of ʿĀbir (Eber), son of Shāliḥ (Salah), son of Arkshādh (Arphaxad), son of Sam (Shem), son of Noah (Noah)? Or to say that he was born in Ur of Chaldea around 2000 years before Christ in reign of so-and-so king who was born in such a place and reigned for this number of years and died in year so and so?

After the discussing the verses of this section, we shall put together a summary of Abraham's story scattered in the Qur'an and then what is found in the Old Testament and other sources about his life and personality so that the insightful researcher can fairly see and then judge what the Qur'an has selected and confirmed.

Nonetheless, the Qur'an has not ignored whatever was necessary of the beneficial knowledge and did not forbid any discussion about the universe and its heavenly and earthly dimensions nor did it prevent anyone from enquiring about the stories of the past nations, social norms, previous generations, and seeking help through all that to acquire the necessary knowledge. The Qur'anic verses highly praise knowledge and encourage reflection, contemplation, deliberation and mediation in so many verses that there is no need to list them here.

"*Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error*": al-Rāghib in *al-Mufradāt* says:

> "The idol (*ṣanam*) is a body made from silver or copper or wood that they worshiped in order to seek closeness to the Almighty God, and its plural is *aṣnām*. The Almighty God said: *'Do you take idols for gods?'* (6:74); *'I will certainly do something against your idols...'* (21:57)."

What al-Rāghib says about the idol made from silver or copper or wood

is just an example and not the exclusive source of its manufacture, rather it was made from whatever could be used to make an image from a variety of metals, stones and etc. It has been narrated that Banū Ḥunayfah, from al-Yamāmah, used to make an idol from cottage cheese; and sometimes they used to make it from the clay and at other times, it was just an illustrated picture.

In any case, the idols sometimes represented intangible dogmatic entity such as the god of the heaven and the earth, and the god of justice; and sometimes they represented tangible entity such as the sun and the moon. Both types of idols were found among the people of Abraham as seen from the archaeological finds of the ruins of Babylon; they used to worship them in order to seek nearness to their gods and through their gods to Almighty God. This is an obvious example of the foolishness of human thoughts in the sense that he expresses ultimate humility—humility of a servant to his Lord—for an image which (erroneously) represents an entity of great importance, and glorifies it; in reality it means that the ultimate humility expressed by the created being for his Creator is now being expressed by the creator (that is, the human) for his own creation (that is, the idol). A person would take a piece of wood and carve an idol, and then he would place it (in a sacred area), worship it, express humility to it, and humble himself to it! That is why Abraham has used the term "*al-aṣnām*, the idols" in the verse as an indefinite noun (in other words, without the *'al'*) in order to show their insignificance and ignominy since they are their products, created by their own hands as has been quoted in his statement to his people: *Said he:* "*What! Do you worship what you hew out?*" (37:95), and also because they lack the most obvious qualities of divinity: knowledge and power as he said to his sire: What he said to his father: "*O my father! Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least.*" (19:42) So, his statement: "*Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error,*" means: Do you take idols that have no significance in them as gods while God is an entity of great importance and so I consider you and your people to be in manifest error. How can this error not be clear to you because it entails worship and expression of humility from the maker (of the idol) who has knowledge and power of his product that lacks knowledge and power? Although the verse under discussion is one of the arguments (rather summary of many arguments that Abraham presented to his father and his community as described in details in many verses of the Qur'an), it is the

first argument he had with his father and his community. The arguments of Abraham that the Almighty God has described consists of his argument with his father and his community on idol-worshiping, his argument on worshiping the star, the sun, and the moon, and his argument with the king.

As for his argument against worship of the star, the moon and the sun, the verses prove that it was done after the argument against idol- worshiping. Reflection and deeper insight (into the verses) show that his argument against the king occurred after his mission was known, and his opposition to paganism and Sabianism had spread, and after breaking of the idols; and the beginning of his arguments was his opposition to the faith of his father and those associated to him before he confronted the people and opposed them. The first argument that he presented for monotheism was his argument with his father and his community regarding idol-worshiping.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرِى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

(6:75) And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure:

The context shows that the term "thus" refers to what was contained in the previous verse: "*...I see you and your people in manifest error*" in the sense that Abraham was shown the truth in that (argument). So the meaning would be: 'And with such an example of demonstration, We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth.' Based on this demonstrative pronoun and the indication in the following verse: (*when the night over-shadowed him*) which shows the connection of the later verses to the previous ones, the word "We show" refers to the past event (even though it has occurred in a future tense) just like the verse: *And We desired to bestow a favour upon those who were deemed weak in the land...* (28:5).

So, the meaning of this verse would be as follows: Verily We have shown Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth that caused him to argue with his father and his people in the matter of the idols making manifest to them their error. Hence We supported him with this providence and gift (that is, showing of the Kingdom), so he was under this state (of Divine Grace) until the night over-shadowed him and he saw the star.

Therefore, the opinion expressed by some commentators that the words

And thus We show... is like a parenthetical clause with no connection to verses before and after it, is not valid and should not be accepted. Same goes for their opinion that Abraham was shown the Kingdom first time when the night over-shadowed him and he saw a star.

...the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth: "The kingdom" (*al-malakūt*) is from *al-mulk* (authority, dominance) which is a verbal noun and implies the intensity of the meaning of dominance (like *al-Ṭāghūt*, the oppressor, and *al-jabarūt*, powerful, in relation to *al-Ṭughyān* and *al-jabr* or *al-jubrān* respectively). The meaning used in the Qur'an is its actual literal meaning without any modification like the other words used in the Divine Speech; of course, the corroborative application of that what be different. For example, the terms *al-mulk*, and *al-malakūt* are used by us for a kind of dominance which is of subjective and relative meaning which we have taken into consideration because of the social necessity of organizing the actions and the persons into a system that will lead to peace, justice and collective energy. Also, this dominance has the potential of being transferred, gifted, usurped and taken by force as we always witness in human societies.

Even though this subjective and relative meaning of *al-mulk* can be applied to the Almighty God in the sense that the true dominance in human society belongs to God, as He says: *...the judgement is only Allah's...* (6:57); *All praise is due to Him in this* (*life*) *and the hereafter...* (28:70), but deeper insight into the conventional meaning of *al-mulk* (dominance) reveals its application on entities in such a way that it can neither end nor be transferred. For example, a person has *mulk*, dominance, upon himself in the sense that he has complete power on his hearing, sight and other actions that emanate from his limbs; so his ears hear and his eyes see, based on his intention and command, and they don't follow the intentions and commands of other people. This is the real meaning of *mulk* and we don't doubt its existence within ourselves in such a way that it can neither end nor be transferred. So, a person has dominance over his own strength and actions, and all of them neither is dependent on his existence, neither independent from it nor free from its need. An eye sees by the permission of the person who sees through it and the ear hears by his permission; if the person didn't exist, there would be no eyes nor any act of seeing and no ears nor any act of hearing. Similar to the situation of the citizen of a society: he acts within it by the permission of the king or the ruler, if there was no managing power that coordinates the elements of the society, there would be no society; if he

disallows certain activities, a citizen would not be able to do that (without facing the consequences).

No doubt, this meaning of *mulk* (dominance) exists for Almighty God on whom depends the creation of things and managing of the system (of universe); no creation is free from need of the Glorified Creator, neither in his own being nor in the powers and activities related to him, he has no freedom, neither alone nor when he is part of the various elements of the universe, connected to the energy of the world where some of its parts are mixed with the other forming this general visible system.

The Almighty God says: *Say: "O Allah, Master of the Kingdom!"* (3:26); *Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth...* (5:120); *Blessed is He in whose hand is the Kingdom, and He has power over all things; who created death and life... Who created the seven heavens one above another...* (67:1–3). These verses, as you can see, relate the *mulk* (dominance) to creation and to the existence of things from Him; relating the creation and existence of things to Him is the basis for His dominance and that is the meaning of His *mulk* in which no one is His partner nor does it disappear from Him, it is neither transferable nor can it be delegated in the sense that He is no more required and is replaced by someone else.

This is the meaning of *malakūt* (kingdom) that has been explained in God's Word: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it: "Be" and it is. Therefore, Glory be to Him in Whose hand is the Kingdom of every thing, and to Him you shall be brought back*, (36:82–83). The second verse clarifies that the domination on everything depends on the word *kun* (say) that is uttered by the Almighty and His Word is His Action and that is His creation. Thus it becomes clear that *malakūt* means the relationship of God to the existence and survival of things; and this relationship of the Creator and the created does not tolerate any partnership, it belongs to Him alone. The status of being the Nourisher that signifies dominance and management does not allow any room for delegation nor transfer of ownership.

Therefore, reflection upon the Kingdom of the universe certainly leads a person to *tawḥīd*, the concept of monotheism as God says: *Do they not consider the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever things Allah has created, and that may be their doom shall have drawn nigh; what announcement would they then believe in after this?* (7:185). As you can see, this verse follows the verse in the beginning of sūrah of al-Mulk (ch.67) quoted earlier.

So, by reflecting on the other relevant verses, it becomes indeed clear

that the meaning of 'showing the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth to Abraham' is that He guided the blessed soul of Abraham to realize the connection of the existence of things to the Almighty, and since this connection does not accept any partnership, he immediately concluded that nothing can be nourished by other than God who has taken upon Himself the management of the system and supervision of the affairs (of the universe). That the idols were images that humans had carved themselves and gave them names that was not authorized by God—such things cannot nourish the humans nor own them while humans have built them with their hands. Moreover, the celestial bodies such as the star, the sun and the moon constantly change from one state to another; they appear and then disappear from people—such things cannot dominate or take upon themselves the management of the universe, as we shall discuss later on.

...and so that he might be of those who are sure: The letter *lām* (in *li-yakūna*, so that he might be) is for explanation; and the sentence is connected to another implied sentence as follows: 'so that he might be this and that and so that he might be of those who are sure.'

Conviction or surety (*al-yaqīn*) means the knowledge that is not contaminated by doubt in any way or shape. Probably, the verse means that he might be sure of God's signs to the level described by the Almighty: *And We made of them Imāms to guide by Our command as they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs* (32:24). This leads to conviction in the Beautiful Names of God and His great attributes. The same kind of conviction has been described regarding the Holy Prophet in what He said: *Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs...* (17:1); and also what He said: *The eye did not dazzle, nor did it exceed the limit. Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord,* (53:17–18). However, as for the conviction about the Exalted Essence of God is concerned well, the Qur'an places it above the level where any doubt, let alone the knowledge, could perceive it; His Essence is only to be acknowledged submissively.

According to the Divine Word, among the special impacts of "the convincing knowledge" in God's signs is the lifting of the veil of materialism from the realities of the creation to the extent willed by the Almighty as He says: *Nay! If you had known with knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell* (102:5–6); *and: Nay! Most surely the record of the*

righteous shall be in the 'Illiyīn. And what will you know what the 'Illiyīn is? It is a written book; those who are drawn near (*to God*) *shall witness it,* (83:18–21).

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَىٰ كَوْكَبًا ۖ قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

(6:76) So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; he said: "Is this my Lord?" So when it set, he said: "I do not love the setting ones.

al-Rāghib in his *al-Mufradāt* says:

> "The origin of *al-jannu* (translated here as over-shadowing) means to cover or conceal something from the senses. It is said: *jannah al-layl*, *ajannahu* and *janna 'alayhi*; so *jannahu* means covered it, *ajannahu* means he made something that would cover it just like *qabartuhu*, *aqbartuhu*, *saqaytuhu*, and *asqaytuhu*; and *janna 'alayhi* means something covered it. The Almighty has said: *'So when the night* (janna 'alayhi) *over-shadowed him...*"

So the night over-shadowing him means that it let down the darkness on him which does not occur simply with the setting of the sun.

The verse, "So when the night over-shadowed him" is a follow up of what had passed earlier about negating the worship of idols since both are connected to God's Word: *And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth.* Based on that, the meaning would be: 'We indeed were showing him some portions of the Kingdom and thus he negated the worshiping of the idols by that, and this situation continued and so when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star and said so-and-so.'

In the sentence: "he saw a star (*kawkaban*)", the word *kawkab* has come as an indefinite noun (that is, without *alif* and *lam*) since the passage is linked to narration of and discussion about (Abraham's argument), and it does not intend to specify that star, whether it was from the planets or the fixed stars because the main argument could apply to any of the stars that rises and sets. However, this does not mean that Abraham pointed to just any star from among the stars without specifying it in any way: Firstly, because the word (as used in this verse) does not support that; it cannot be said about a person who points towards a star from among the countless stars and says: 'This is my Lord,' that he just saw a random star and said: 'This is

my Lord.' Secondly, the context of the verses show that they were a people there who worshiped the specific star towards which Abraham pointed and said what he said about it.

Moreover, the Sabaeans did not worship any star and they did not hold anything sacred except the planets. What supports the view that the star under discussion here was the Venus is because the Sabaeans adored and assigned the worldly events only to the seven celestial bodies that they used to call "the seven planets": the Moon, the Mercury, the Venus, the Sun, the Mars, the Jupiter, and the Saturn. The people of India were those who used to adore the fixed stars and assign the worldly events to them; so were some sorcerers and Arab idol worshipers and others.

Obviously, the star (mentioned in the verse) was one of the seven planets. The Moon and the Sun have been mentioned later on (in Abraham's conversation) while the Mercury is rarely seen because of its constrained orbit. Therefore, it must have been one of the remaining four: Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Among these, Venus is the only star whose restrained orbit prevents it from moving away from the Sun more than 47 degrees, and therefore it always follows the Sun without fail: Sometimes it would precede it and rise before the sunrise, and at that time it is known as 'the morning star' and then it sets after the sunrise. At other times it follows the Sun and appears after sunset on the western horizon and it stays for a short while in early night before setting—if it is the nights after the middle of the lunar month, e.g., 18th, 19th and 20th, it sets at the time of moonrise; so you will observe that the Sun has set and the Venus will appear on the western horizon and then it will set an hour or two after the sunset, and then at that time or shortly thereafter the Moon will rise. From those four planets, these characteristics are peculiar to Venus, and in other planets like Jupiter, Mars and Saturn these are only incidental which occur only in special situations that it does not register in the mind, and thus it assumes that, that star is the Venus. In any case, Venus is the most beautiful, the most delightful and the most shinning of the twinkling stars that attracts the eyes of a person who is looking at the sky when night descends and darkness overshadows the horizons.

This is the best explanation of the verse based on what comes to the mind when the Almighty says: "*So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; he said: 'This is my Lord. So when it set, he said: I do not love the setting ones,'*(76) *Then when he saw the moon rising...*" What we have said above is

also supported by what has been mentioned in some of the narrations of the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt that the star (under discussion) was the Venus. Based on this, we can say that Abraham had seen the Venus and that the people believed in the obligation of worshiping it in form of devotion, prayer and offering of sacrifice; and that the Venus was following the Sun at its setting time, and that the night was of the later half of the lunar month. When the night over-shadowed him, he saw the Venus on the western horizon until it set and then he saw the Moon rising thereafter.

Then we come to the sentence: "...he said: 'This is my Lord.'" The meaning of *rabb* (Lord) is the owner of things possessed by him, the one who manages their affairs, not the one who created the heavens and the earth and originated everything from non-existence. God, the Almighty is not a body or bodily entity, and He does not occupy space nor can He be an object of indication. What is undoubtedly clear from the statement quoted of the conversation of Abraham with his people concerning the idols is that he had been blessed with proof from His Lord and that he had knowledge about God and His signs—and all these clarified for him that the Almighty God is exalted above any form of body, image and limitations. God quotes his conversation with his father: "*O my father! Truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me; I will guide you on a right path...*" (19:43).

However, the idol worshipers and the Sabaeans did not ascribe an equal partner to the Almighty God in creation, rather they ascribed the partner in form of someone or something—while being created by God or at least whose existence depended on Him—was assigned by the management of the creation like the god of beauty, the god of justice, the god of fertility or to manage some of the creation, for example, the god of human or the god of a tribe or the god of specific kings and aristocrats. Discoveries of their ruins, their historical reports as well as the existing idol worshipers prove this fact. So, Abraham's statement about the planet that: "This is my Lord," intended to prove that it was the god who managed the issues, and not God, the Creator and the Originator.

This is also proven by what been mentioned at the end of the verses under discussion: *...he said: "O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up* (*with God*). *Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.*" 6:79–80). It obviously means that he is moving away from polytheism and

reaches to the conclusion that God has no partner; he does not talk about proving God's existence.

The apparent meaning of the verses show that Abraham accepted the fact that for all things there is God, the Originator, the Unique, Who has no partner in His Creation and Origination, and that is God, the Sublime; and that humans have a Lord who obviously manages their affairs. His search was only to see whether this Lord who manages the affairs is the same Almighty God to Whom creation and origination is attributed or one of His creations whom He has taken as a partner for Himself and delegated the task of management to him. Therefore, he presents the hypothesis about the star (that they worshiped) and then the moon and then the sun, and looks into each one of them to see whether they are capable of handling the task of managing (the universe in general) and the management of people's affairs (in particular).

Although this proposition and consideration obviously occurs before attaining the convincing proof of the result—since the result is subsequent to the rational proof—it does not harm Abraham (and his status as a believer). As we had explained earlier, the verses describe the story of Abraham (and the human being) in the first phase of discerning (truth from falsehood) and of being capable of taking on the religious obligations by contemplating in matters of monotheism and other fundamental thoughts, and that he was like a slate devoid of any shapes and writings at all. Then he starts searching and begins by proving certain things and rejecting certain others in order to reach to the true belief and sound faith. All the while, he is on the path of truth and there is no blame on him during the time when he goes through the process between rejecting certain things out of lack of distinction and accepting other things on basis of complete understanding and full knowledge of the truth.

Human life by necessity goes through the stage when it transforms from lack of knowledge about essential beliefs to the stage of awareness when rationally he is obliged to seek and consider (the truth). This is a general phenomenon in human life in which he progresses from deficiency to perfection; all humans are equal in this matter. Of course, there are exceptions in case of some individuals that goes against this general phenomenon in which they demonstrate perceptive faculty and knowledge before the normal age of discernment and maturity as the Qur'an has mentioned about Jesus and John (Yaḥyā)—that is indeed against the prevailing norm and not all human

have that quality nor all prophets have done such a thing.

In short, the human being does not possess the conditions that will obligate him to have sound belief or do good deeds from the first day when the soul is breathed into him; he gradually gains that ability until the conditions are fulfilled which then obligates him to seek and consider the truth. So, his life is indeed divided into two parts: before the age of discernment and maturity and after the age of discernment and maturity, and it is in the latter stage that he is capable of dealing with matters of belief and confronts them in that stage of life. Between these two phases, there is an intermediary stage where he is confronted with the duty of seeking and considering the truth. Therein he seeks the true belief to which his nature guides him by means of arguments: Does he or the universe exist without a creator or do they have a creator? If yes, is the creator one or has he a partner? Then he looks at the signs visible in the universe for these propositions and reflects on them whether they support or deny his propositions, and so he accepts one and rejects the other. As long as his process of arguments does not reach a solid conclusion, he is uncertain and undecided; he is only at stage of assumption and reflection on the idea.

Based on this reflection, the statement of Abraham about the star: "This is my Lord," as well as his forthcoming statements about the moon and the sun are not based on certainty and firmness that would be considered as polytheism. It is just a proposition that needs to be considered in relation to the signs that prove and support it. This may be proved from the verses that appear to say that he was in the state of anticipation and expectation. This is one perspective.

However, Abraham's statement in his argument with his father that the Almighty God has narrated in sūrah of Maryam (ch.19): "*O my father! Truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me; I will guide you on a right path. O my father! Serve not the Satan; surely the Satan is disobedient to the Beneficent* (God). *O my father! Surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent* (God) *should afflict you so that you should be a friend of the Satan.*" *He said: "Do you dislike my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist, I will certainly revile you, and leave me for a time.*" *He* (Abraham) *said: "Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me;*" (19:43–47), proves that he (Abraham) was fully aware of the reality, and that the one who manages his affairs is affectionate towards him and greatly honours him, is the Almighty God and none else.

Therefore, his statement: "This is my Lord", is of a genre in which a person considers himself to be like them, goes along with them (in their ideas), and then presents them with the evidence that proves the weakness of their idea and the falsity of their statement. This method of argument is most appealing to the opponent's sense of justice, most effective in subduing his bias and prejudice, and most suitable in making him listen to the argument.

So when it set, he said: 'I do not love the setting ones': al-Ufūl (means setting (of something; here it means setting of the star). It proves the falsity of the star's lordship by attributing the quality of setting to it. The star that sets is cut off from those upon whom it had risen, and the task of managing the creation does not sit well with being cut off.

Indeed, godship and dependency is a real relationship between the Lord and the one who is nourished by Him, and that leads to the love of nourished one towards His Lord because of the natural attraction towards Him and being linked to Him. Love cannot be based on something that perishes and whose beauty ends, the same beauty that was reason for love. What we observe in the human that he often falls in love with the present and prevailing beauty because he is intensely engrossed into it and he does not pay any attention to the fact that one day it will end and vanish. Therefore, the Lord must be ever-living and not subject to change like the embellished decorations that live and then die, exist and then perish, rise and then set, appear and then disappear, attain youthfulness and then become old, are delightful and then become disfigured. This is a rational argument even though it might appear as rhetoric or poetry. Ponder on it.

Anyway, Abraham invalidated the lordship of the star on basis of its setting dimension in two ways: Either by alluding to the fact that he does not love it because of its setting since dependency and servitude is based on love, and one who does not love something cannot worship it. It has been narrated from Imām al-Ṣādiq: "Is religion anything but love?" We have explained that earlier. Or by basing on absence of love and the issue of setting was mentioned as a justification for not loving it since it is contrary to lordship and divinity.

Being object of love is an essential concomitant for lordship and divinity; and something that lacks the true and lasting beauty cannot be an object of love, and therefore it cannot be the lord. The context of the argument in this verse is apparently based on this point.

In this conversation of Abraham, following points can be discerned:

Firstly, there is an indication of essential link between love and lordship or between love and sense of servitude.

Secondly, Abraham has used the attribute common between the star and between the moon and the sun (that is, all of them rise and then set), and has repeated the argument in their cases also. This was done either because he was unaware, as mentioned earlier, that the moon and the sun also rise and set in the same way as the star or because the people in all three cases were different groups.

Thirdly, in his statement of negating the love when he says: "I do not love the setting ones", he has used the style (*al-āfilīyn*, the setting ones) that is used for intelligent beings (and not for inanimate objects like the moon and the sun). This was sort of an indication that something that lacks perception and reason does not at all deserve lordship as he has indicated in his statement: "*O my father! Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least;*" (19:42), and his other statement: When he said to his father and his people: "*What do you worship?*" *They said:* "*We worship idols, so we shall be their votaries.*" *He said:* "*Do they hear you when you call? Or do they profit you or cause you harm?*" *They said:* "*Nay, we found our fathers doing so.*" (26:70–74). First he asked them about their idols as if he did not know anything about them; and so they replied to him that they are statues and images devoid of perception and sensation. Then he asked them about their knowledge and power while he used terms associated with those who have intelligence as an indication that God must possess this quality of intelligence.

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

(6:77) Then when he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my Lord." So when it set, he said: "If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people."

al-Buzūgh means the rising. As for the discussion about "Then when he saw..." that has already passed earlier because of its connection to the previous argument. Abraham's statement that "This is my Lord" is of a genre in which a person goes along with the others as was discussed in the previous verse.

When the moon set, he said: "If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people." Here Abraham has taken into consideration what he had said earlier in invalidating the argument for lordship of the star—since both the star and the moon rise and set, and setting is not suitable for lordship as he said: *I do not love the setting ones*, so the conclusion is the same for both. So his statement: "If my Lord had not guided me..." is linked to the observation he had made (earlier) concerning the moon that "This is my Lord": if he had continued to insist on it, then he would have been in error and one of those misguided individuals who believed in the lordship of the moon. The statement about the moon was an error for the same reason as given earlier about the star since the quality of setting is not exclusive to it; rather it can apply to it as well as other similar entities.

From the above, we can surmise the following:

Firstly, there were people there who believed in the lordship of the moon just as those who believed in the star. Moreover, the verse that follows: "*O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up* (*with Allah*)," (6:78) is also indicative of this fact.

Secondly, Abraham was at that time in state of search, hoping to attain Divine guidance and expecting his Lord's grace in form of the sound belief and the indisputable perspective irrespective of the fact whether his statements are taken in the literal sense (supposing that he was indeed seeking the truth) or in the rhetoric sense (in which he initially agrees with a hypothesis in order to show its flaw). This was discussed earlier.

Thirdly, Abraham was certain that he has a Lord who manages his guidance and his other affairs and that he was only seeking Him, either in the real sense or in the sense of pretence, so that he may identify Him: is He Himself the one who created the heavens and the earth or was it created by some of His creation? And when it dawned upon him that the star and the moon are incapable of such a task because of their setting, he expected his Lord to guide him towards Himself and purify him of the misguidance of those who were in error.

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي هَٰذَا أَكْبَرُ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

(6:78) Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest." So when it set, he said: "O my people! Surely I

am clear of what you set up (with Allah)."

"Then when" is an indication of the connection of this statement with the previous argument; and even the words: "This is my Lord" has occurred either in hypothetical sense or in the style of initially agreeing with the view (in order to disprove it) as was discussed in previous verse.

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(On Usage of Masculine Pronoun for a Feminine Noun):

The words: "This is my Lord" was also repeated in case of the moon when he saw it rising after having seen the star; and that is why, in this third case, he added the description: "this is the greatest" for the sun as final hypothesis of its lordship after proving the first two cases as invalid. It was mentioned earlier that using of the pronoun *hādhā* (this) while pointing to the sun was done because Abraham didn't know that it was a celestial body that rises and sets from our perspective every day and night, and that the phenomenon of day and night as well as the four seasons are related to it.

Using the masculine pronoun is an indication that the person was not able to clearly distinguish the entity of his point of reference: it is just like the situation when you see shape of a person coming to you from far but you are unable to distinguish it as male or female, and so you say: "Who is *this*?" (This (*hādhā*) is masculine.) Similar to a situation where you cannot discern whether the shape is of a living being or an object, and so you say: "Who is *this*?" (Using the same *hādhā*.) Probably this was the first time that Abraham had come out to his uncle and his people from isolation and had not witnessed the outside world and the human society, and so when he saw a celestial body like the star and the moon and the sun—whenever he saw each one of them as a shinning lamp—he said: "This is my Lord", as if he had no complete knowledge of it as we had mentioned earlier.

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This is supported in a way by his statement: *So when it set, he said: "I do not love the setting ones."* There is an indication in it that Abraham assumed momentarily that the star was the Lord until he saw its setting and then decided that his assumption was wrong and it can't be the lord. If he had known that the star sets, then he would have denied its lordship earlier as he had done in case of the idols when he said to his uncle: "*Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error,*" (6:74); and: "*O my father! Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least,*" (19:42).

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It is also possible to say that Abraham delayed his statement: "*I do not*

love the setting ones", until the star set so that he could prove to them what could be discerned by sense of observation as he had done when he smashed the idols except the biggest one so that they can see the inability of the idols and that they are just inanimate objects that cannot prevent any harm or evil from themselves.

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In explaining the masculine usage of the demonstrative pronoun "this" (*hādhā*), the exegetes have treaded different paths:

(1) Some say that using the masculine pronoun was in order to link it to the point of reference or the celestial bright body; in other words, it says: "this point of reference or this celestial bright body is my Lord since it is the greatest." (That is, it does not refer to the sun, which is a feminine noun.)

Although using the masculine pronounce with such an explanation is valid but there must be a reason to justify such a usage. It is not correct to do so without a proper justification, otherwise it will be permissible to change every feminine pronoun into masculine arbitrarily and that will ruin the language itself.

(2) Some say that (the usage of masculine pronoun for a feminine object) is based on the rule of the subject following the predicate in its gender since the terms "the Lord" and "the greatest" are masculine therefore the demonstrative pronoun has followed the masculine form. An example of a reverse form can be seen in the Almighty's Word: *Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say...* (6:23) in which the masculine predicate has followed the feminine subject.

Moreover, there is a view that the people of Abraham's era believed in feminine gods also as they believed in masculine ones, and they describe the female gods as *ilāhah* (god), *rabbah* (lord) (both ending with a feminine *h*), *bint Allah* (God's daughter) and *zawjat al-rabb* (wife of the lord). Based on this, it was appropriate to use the feminine *rabbah* (instead of *rabb*) and so the sentence should have been *hādhihi rabbatī* or *Ālihatī*. The criticism on the predicate following the gender of the subject in: "This is my Lord", also applies to the subject following the predicate. Thus there would be no meaning in the rule of following the pronouns.

The sentence: This is greater is the predicate which has an elative noun ('greater') and the rule in elative noun is that if it comes as a predicate, it should come in the noun form of *af'al* and it is neutral as far as gender is considered. So, it can be said that "Zayd is *afḍal* (better) than 'Umar" and

also "Laylā is *ajmal* (more beautiful) than Salmā." With such a gender-neutral entity, we do not accept that it is from the masculine words that follows the subject.

(3) Some say that using masculine form in the demonstrative pro- noun was for honouring the sun since lordship is attributed to it—this is done to shield the Lord from quality of femininity.

However, they did not consider femininity as an inferior quality that needed to be shielded from divinity. The people of Babylon themselves had female gods such as Ninmah, the mother goddess, Ninkarrak, the daughter of Anu (a god of heaven), Mylitta, wife of Shamash, Zarbanit, the goddess of nursing, and goddess Anunnaki. A group of Arab polytheists used to worship the angels and consider them as God's daughters. In interpretation of the verse: *They did not call besides Him on any thing but females;* (4:117), it is said that they used to call their gods by female names and would say: 'female of so-and-so tribe' referring to the idol that the tribe worshiped.

(4) Some among the exegetes say that the people of Abraham used to worship the sun as the male god and believed that he had a wife by the name of Anuunit. And so the verse under discussion reflects their belief.

However, their belief that the sun is male does not justify changing the femininity of the word to masculine. Moreover, Abraham's statement to Nimrod: *So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it* (*you*) *from the west;* (2:258) ("it" is a feminine pronoun) while referring to the sun defies their claim.

(5) Some say that Abraham spoke Syriac language, the language of his people, and they did not differentiate between the pronouns and the demonstrative pronouns on gender lines rather they used masculine form for all; and that the Noble Qur'an has maintained his statement accordingly in masculine form.

However, this is not an acceptable explanation since it is common tofollow the grammar rules of the words in spite of difference in languages;it is actually permission to follow the grammar rules especially when it comes to the meaning that is not dependent on specific wordings. Moreover, the Almighty has quoted many arguments and prayers fromAbraham in the Qur'an and in many of those cases the feminine gender has been considered appropriately. So, why should this case bedifferent by ignoring the femininity of the pronouns? Even in his statement when arguing with the king of Babylon: *So surely Allah brings the sun from the east, then bring it* (you) *from the west,*

(2:258).Abraham has used a feminine pronoun while referring to the sun.

(6) The most surprising of the views on this matter is what has been mentioned by some commentators stubbornly that Abraham as well as Ishmael and Hājar used to speak the old Arabic language. The summary of his argument is the following: The anthropologists have proven that the Arabs of the Peninsula, from dawn of history, had colonized the Chaldean cities as well as Egypt and their language had dominated those regions. Some of them have clearly stated that King Hammurabi, who was a contemporary of Abraham, was an Arab; and that Hammurabi was a kind and peaceful ruler, and has been described in the Old Testament as a great priest. It also says that Hammurabi blessed Abraham and that Abraham gave him the tenth of everything. He also says: It is known in the books of ḥadīth and Arabic history that Abraham settled his son, Ishmael, with his Egyptian mother Hājar in the valley which emerged later on as the city of Mecca, and that God made a group from the Jurham tribe to settle with them and be subservient to them; and that Abraham used to periodically visit them both, and that he and Ishmael built the Holy House of God and spread the faith of monotheism in the Arab land. It says in a ḥadīth that Abraham came once to Mecca to visit his son, who had gone for hunting, and so he talked with his wife who was from Jurham tribe and he was not pleased with her attitude. Then he came again to visit his son and did not find him, and so he talked with his another wife who invited him to come in and washed his head. Abraham was pleased with her and prayed for her. All this proves that he used to speak Arabic. This is the summary of that commentator's argument.

However, this is not a plausible explanation because proximity of the Arabs of the Peninsula to Egypt and Chaldean land, and their interaction with them or colonizing and dominating them does not necessarily mean that their language was changed to Arabic. The language of Egypt was Egyptian and the language of Chaldean and Assyrian people was Syriac. Yes such interaction mutually influences the languages as far as some names and words are concerned as we see in the Holy Qur'an example of words like *al-qisṭās* and *al-istabraq*, etc.[1]

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1 *al-Qisṭās* (see 17:35) means balance, scale; it is an Arabicized word of Roman origin. *al-Istabraq* (see 55:74) means brocade is an Arabicized word of Persian origin. (Trans.)

As for his statement that Hammurabi was a contemporary of Abraham, that cannot be collaborated by reliable historical sources, the ruins of Babylon that have been discovered, and the stone known as Code of Hammurabi (that was devised and implemented by him in his kingdom and it is known as the most ancient code of law in the world). Some scholars have said that Hammurabi's reign was between 1686 BC and 1728 BC; while other have said that he ruled Babylon during 2232–2287 BC. Whereas Abraham lived around 2000 BC. Moreover, Hammurabi was an idol worshiper, and under the code of law in the stone (known as the Code of Hammurabi), he seeks help from gods for perpetuity of his laws, popular support for it and punishment for those who intend to change or oppose it.

As for his statement about Abraham settling his son and his slave-girl in the southwest plains of Arabia, building of the Holy Kaʿbah, spreading God's religion, and his mutual understanding with the Arabs—none of this proves that he used to talk in Arabic language. This is obvious.

Let us now return to our discussion. God's statement: "then when" in (6:78) *Then when he saw the sun rising*, shows its connection to the earlier verse: *So when it set, he said: "If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people."* It proves that the moon had already set when Abraham saw the sun rising. This could have happened only in autumn or winter in northern altitudes (that had the lands of Chaldea) when nights are longer, especially when the moon is in the southern constellation like the Archer and the Capricorn. During such conditions, the moon can set before the sun in the latter half of the lunar month. We earlier saw God's statement: *So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; he said: "This is my Lord." So when it set, he said: "I do not love the setting ones." Then when he saw the moon rising, he said: "Is this my Lord?"* (6:76–77). Upon added reflection, the statement proves that the night was from the latter half of the lunar month and that the star was the Venus which Abraham saw first in the west while it was descending and then he witnessed its setting and then the rising of the moon from the east.

The verses prove that Abraham disputed with his people about the idols during the daytime and was engaged with them on that day till the night over-shaded him and at that time he saw the Venus and the people who worship it. So, he went along with them in (believing in) its lordship by saying: "This is my Lord." He continued to observe it until it set. And that night was from the long nights of the latter half of the lunar month

and perhaps the moon was in orbit in the shorter circle from the southern circles of the orbit but when it set, he rejected its lordship. He continued to look for his Lord and sought His refugee against misguidance until the sun rose. He saw it rising and of bigger size than whatever he had seen earlier of the star and the moon; so he again joined them in (believing in) its lordship even though the falsity of the lordship of the star and the moon was clear to him and they were both celestial bright bodies like it but he took its bigger size as a justification to accept its lordship and ended up saying: "This is my Lord; it is bigger." He sat anticipating the future until the sun also set and so he rejected its lordship and polytheism of his people by saying: "*O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up* (*with Allah*)." And he affirmed the lordship of Almighty God as he had affirmed His divinity in the sense of creating the heavens and the earth and originating them. So he said: "*Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him*—that is, being submissive to the Divinity—*Who originated the heavens and the earth*,—without any deviation to the right or the left—*and I am not of the polytheists,*"—by associating anything from His creation and invention to Him in worship and submission, (6:79).

It has been mentioned earlier that the presence of God's statement: *And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure*, in midst of these verses proves that Abraham indeed deduced the arguments (that he used against his father and his people) from what he used to see of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that God has blessed him with the surety—the result of showing him the kingdom—upon his heart. And this is clear evidence that the arguments that Abraham used were demonstrative proof emanating from the breast of conviction as seen in our explanation of his words: "*I do not love the setting ones.*"

The following points become clear from the previous discussion:

Firstly, Abraham's statement that: "I do not love the setting ones," is a demonstrative convincing argument based on him not loving the setting ones and the incompatibility of setting with divinity.

A commentator has apparently opined that Abraham's argument was a common argument and not a demonstrative argument. He says: "The truth is that the statement (of Abraham) was a subtle allusion, not an explicit speculative argument," in which he is alluding to his people's ignorance in

worshiping the stars: they are worshiping something that hides itself from them and is unaware of their act of worship. This is the basis of considering 'setting' as incomputable with divinity (as opposed to 'rising' and 'appearing') and he based his argument on it since one of the qualities of divinity is appearance even though His appearance is different to that of His creation.[1]

This commentator is, first of all, oblivious of the fact that placing ofthe Almighty's statement: *And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdomof the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure,* among the verses containing the arguments is the strongest evidence that his arguments were based on what he saw of the Divine Kingdom which is the basis of his conviction about God and His signs. With this proof, how is it conceivable that his argument was a common and not a demonstrative one?

The second point of this commentator's oblivion is that the argument is based on love and absence of love, not on the issue of 'setting'. Moreover, even if the argument is based on the issue of 'setting', that does not exclude it from being a demonstrative argument. Abraham indeed described his reason for repudiating their divinity by saying that he found them to be setting and that he does not love the setting ones and so he does not worship them. It is a fact that a human being worships his Lord because He is the Lord, that is, He manages the affair of the human being, and grants him life, sustenance, health, wealth, safety, power, knowledge and others things that he needs for his survival, so he is connected to His Lord from all aspects of existence. Thus, it is part of human nature that he should love whatever he needs and he should love whoever provides those needs; no sensible person can doubt this reality. So, the human being worships the Lord because he loves Him in order to seek his benefits or to avert harm from himself or both.

It is also human nature that he does not link himself to something that has no permanence except that sometimes greed or lust diverts his nature towards the enjoyment and turns him away from reflecting on its temporary and passing phase. The Noble Qur'an has frequently used this style to condemn the world and has discouraged the people from excessive attachment to its beauties and submerging into its desires. For example: *The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We sent down from the sky; by its mingling the herbage of the earth of which men and cattle eat grows; until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that*

1 This refers to Rāshīd Riḍā in *al-Manār*, vol.7, p.466. (Trans.)

they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day,so We render it as reaped, as though it had not been in existence yesterday... (10:24); *What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring...* (16:96); and *...what is with Allah is better and more lasting...* (42:36).

So, Abraham's statement that: "I do not love the setting ones", proves that a thing that disappears from humans and has neither permanence nor stability does not deserve to be loved by them or be attached to them. The God that a human being worships should be such that he can love Him, and so it follows that God cannot disappear from him and lose him; and therefore these celestial bodies do not deserve the title of divinity. This is, as you can see, an argument that is known to the common person as well as the scholars.

A third point of this commentator's confusion is between the rising (*al-buzūgh*) and the appearance (*al-ẓuhūr*), and he has concluded that "the rising" is compatible with divinity; rather Abraham's statement is based on the fact of rising since one of the qualities of the Lord is to be visible. (Our response is that) what has been mentioned in the verse—and that is not the basis of the argument—is *al-buzūgh* which means rising and appearing after being in concealment and that is incompatible with divinity. Moreover, the question: "Why did Abraham base his argument on setting (*al-ufūl*) and not on rising (*al-buzūgh*)?" remains unanswered.

Secondly, considering "the setting" (*al-ufūl*) as part of the argument and not "the rising" (*al-buzūgh*) is so because rising, unlike setting, does not emanate the lack of love which is the basis of the argument. This explains the response given (by al-Zamakhsharī) in *al-Kashshāf* about using *al-ufūl* instead of *al-buzūgh*: "If you say: 'Why did he argue against them on basis of setting and not rising while both have phenomenon of change from a state to another?' I would say: 'The argument based on setting is clearer since its change is associated with disappearance and concealment.' " The argument, as you now know, is based on lack of love and not the setting itself that would demand the shift from rising to setting. (And so this question and its answer are redundant.)

Thirdly, the argument only intends to negate the 'lordship' of the three celestial bodies in the sense of managing the world or the human life, and not the 'lordship' in sense of creation and management altogether. The idol-worshipers and star-worshipers themselves do not deny that their gods are not the Lord (in sense of the Creator) that is in fact God the One only who has no partner.

This explains the opinion of some theologians who say that "the setting" has been taken as basis of the argument since it denotes a possible being, and whatever is possible is dependent on a cause and stands at the end of the chain of causes linked to the Necessary Being. This is similar to the understanding of other scholars who say that "the setting" negates divinity because it is a movement and every movement must have a mover, and that chain must stop at the First Mover who does not need anyone and does not change, and that is the Almighty God.

Both these arguments, while being demonstrative arguments, are actually negating from the dependent and moving entities the status of lordship in the sense of the First Cause upon whom all the causes are dependent, and in the sense of the Creator and Sustainer upon whom all the causes rely. However, the worshipers of the stars such as the Sabaeans and others, even though they believed that the celestial bodies were eternal, everlasting and constantly in movement, yet they did not deny that all these are effects dependent in their existence and their power upon the Almighty. So these two explanations are relevant to the atheists who deny the existence of the Creator, and not to the Sabaeans and the idol-worshipers of multiple gods whom Abraham was addressing in his arguments. Moreover, you know that the argument was not based on the phenomenon of 'setting' rather on the lack of love for something that sets and disappears.

As for the justification of basing the argument on the concept of possible being (that is dependent) and the concept of movement (by explaining "the setting" as something that is dependent and moved) is not valid since the Arabs did not equate 'setting' with dependence or createdness nor with change or movement. The commentator is oblivious of the fact that they don't claim that "the setting" in the verse means dependency or movement, rather they say that "the setting" is used as an argument to prove dependency or movement and change. As for the meaning of "the setting" as disappearance after visibility and concealment after appearance, that is incompatible with the status of divinity but is compatible with lordship (in the meaning of lesser gods) as the commentator himself has confessed to it.

Moreover, even the Almighty God is absent from our perception even though no change occurs in neither Him nor the phenomenon of disappearance after visibility, and concealment after appearance occur in His case. Thus, the argument that the disappearance and concealment in case of the Almighty is from our perspective, not from His perspective; and because

of our preoccupation with things that divert our attention from Him, not because of limitation in His Being and lack in His power—this argument is not helpful because the disappearance of these celestial bodies, especially the daily movement of the sun, is also from our perspective since we are part of the earth that rotates daily on its own axis and turns us away from the direction of these celestial bodies; so in reality, it is us who set down from them after having risen up towards them, and it is just delusion in perception that makes us think otherwise.

al-Rāzī has tried to reconcile all these views in his commentary as follows: "*al-Ufūl* means disappearance of a thing after its visibility. Once you know this, a person can raise a question: *al-Ufūl* indeed proves createdness since it is part of a movement; and in that sense, rising also proves createdness. So, why did Abraham abandon the rising as basis of the argument and moved on to the setting to prove his point?

"The answer is: No doubt that rising and setting both are equal in proving the createdness of the sun. However, the proof that the Prophets use in calling the people towards God should definitely be obviously clear in a way that it can be understood by the clever, the less intelligent and the intelligent person alike. Although the argument based on movement is strong but it is subtle and only the learned people can perceive it. Whereas the argument based on setting is a clear proof known to everyone: the power of the star disappears with its setting. And so the argument of setting proved the point fully.

"Some research scholars have said that: The act of setting down as dimension of createdness is also *ufūl*; and the best argument is the one that is suitable for all levels: the experts, the average persons, and the common people: The specialists connect *ufūl* to the phenomenon of possible and dependent being, and every dependent entity is perpetually in need and the chain of dependence must end with an Omnipotent Being as the Qur'an says: *and to your Lord is the goal*; (53:42). The average persons connect *ufūl* to movement, and every moving entity is a created being and every created being is eventually in need of an Eternal and Omnipotent Being; therefore, whatever sets cannot be god since God is the one who is needed by the one who sets. The common people perceive *ufūl* simply as setting; and they see that whenever a star nears setting, its radiance diminishes, its light decreases and its power vanishes, and it becomes like an abdicated ruler and with such an attribute it lacks divinity. So, this one sentence: 'I do not love the setting ones' is

comprehensive enough to cover all levels from 'the ones being near (to God)' (*al-muqarrabūn*) to 'the People of the Right Hand' (*aṣḥābu al-maymanah*) and 'the People of the Left Hand' (*aṣḥābu al-mash'amah*). Hence, it becomes the most complete of the proofs and the best of the arguments.

"It also has another subtle point: Abraham was arguing against those who were (not only star-worshipers but also) astrologers. The opinion of the astrologers is that when the star is in the eastern quarter of the horizon rising towards the sky's zenith, it has strong impact but when it is in the western horizon close to the setting point, it loses the intensity and becomes weaker. Abraham used this subtle point to prove that God is a reality whose power never decreases nor does His perfection ware off while your belief is that the star, when it is in the western horizon, becomes weak, less effective and incapable of having any impact on the world. This proves the fault in the star's lordship. So, based on the beliefs of the astrologers' themselves, the phenomenon of setting has stronger appeal in showing the fault in the lordship of the star." Thus ends the relevant quotation from al-Rāzī in its entirety.[1]

By pondering on what has been quoted, you will realize that al-Rāzī's mastery in categorizing the argument into various parts based on difference among the people and his various explanations cannot be proven by even a single word of the verse under discussion. Nor does it negate the belief of the Sabaeans and the star-worshipers since they do not believe in the celestial body as the Supreme God who has unlimited and absolute power; rather they believe in it as a dependent created being which is perpetually in motion and the earth is managed by its movement. None of the explanations of al-Rāzī negate this belief. He apparently realized the objection after the passage quoted earlier and so further elaborated the issue and tried at length to get out of the riddle without any success.

Moreover, the second argument that he presented (on the concept of movement) is incomplete. Movement only proves the createdness of the moving entity from perspective of its quality, that is, the movement itself, and not by itself. The details of this argument should be sought in its appropriate place.

Fourthly, Abraham arranged his arguments in accordance with the signs

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1 See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīh al-ghayb*, vol.13 (Beirut: *Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth*, 1420 AH) p.42–43. (Trans.)

of the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth that Almighty God had shown to him, and whenever the opportunity availed itself to discuss with his father and his people. In this, he used the perceivable items because he had not seen the daily changing phenomenon of the celestial bodies as mentioned earlier or because he wanted to discuss with them on basis of what was physically perceivable to them. Therefore, when he saw one of the three celestial bodies bright and rising, he said: "This is my Lord"; but when he saw it setting, he said: "I do not love the setting ones."

This will explain the plausible question that arises out of Abraham's statement: "And when the night overtook him, he saw the star…", it proves that he was with the people on the day preceding the night, so why did he not first mention the sun to negate its divinity?

It is possible that he came to his people for discussion when the time did not allow him more that whatever he argued with them concerning the idols; and so he was arguing with them during the daytimeor for so long until the night overtook him.

There are other possibilities also such as the cloudy skies or that the people used to gather for worship and sacrifice only at the beginning of sunrise and he wanted to physically show them the argument.

Fifthly, it is said that the verses prove that guidance comes from Almighty God, and these verses do not relative misguidance to Him. Indeed His Word: "If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people;" partly proves that the human being, if left on his own nature, would be inflicted with misguidance if his Lord does not guide him. This is also the import of the verse: *…and were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure…* (24:21). *Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases…* (28:56)—these verses clarify that the act of misguidance that is attributed to the Almighty refers to the misguidance in form of punishment (for ignoring the divine guidance) and not to initial misguidance. Detailed discussion on this has passed in volume one of this book.[1]

Sixthly, Abraham based his argument in negating the lordship of the three celestial bodies on the premise of not loving the setting ones because of their *ufūl*, the setting phenomenon. *Ufūl* means losing something after

1 See *al-Mīzān* (Eng. transl.) vol.1. Misguidance when attributed to the Almighty is better explained by the term "abandonment, *khidhlān*" (Trans.).

having found it; and this is an attribute incompatible with the feeling of love that would justify the worship of the beloved. If setting is a repelling attribute in case of material entities (compelling them to cessation, death, perdition and passing away), it will be a convincing argument against polytheism and idol worshiping. It can actually even be an argument against the views of some idol-worshipers who believe in divinity of gods of various categories and luminous entities, and consider them to be beyond the realm of materialism and nature, higher than body and movement—for they clearly confess that even though these entities have pure essence and noble existence, they are perishable in face of the Eternal Light and humble under the Divine Power. With such a quality, their love will be attached only to the One who manages them and not to various gods.

Commentary continues:

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

(6:79) "Surely I have turned my face, being upright (ḥanīfan) wholly to Him Who originated (faṭara) the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists."

(On *Faṭara*, originated:)

al-Rāghib says in his *al-Mufradāt*:

> "The origin of *al-faṭr* means the vertical rapture or rip: it is said: '*Faṭar*— so-and-so ripped.' (Its other derivatives give other means:) *Afṭara*—he broke the fast; and *infaṭara*—it sprouted (as in a plant rupturing the earth). Sometimes it occurs in a negative sense such as: he said, 'Do you see any *fuṭūr*—(that is, any defect and weakness) in it?' And sometimes it occurs in a positive sense such as: *The heaven shall rend asunder thereby; His promise is ever brought to fulfillment,* (73:18). *Faṭart al-shāt* means 'I milked the sheep with two fingers.' *Faṭart al-ajīn* means 'I kneaded the dough and then baked a bread immediately.'
>
> "Also, from *al-faṭr* comes *al-fiṭrah*, the nature. *Faṭara 'llāh al-khalq* means God created something and made it in specific mold part of His various actions as He says in His statement: ...*the nature made*

> *by God in which He has made men;* (30:30)—this refers to the innate knowledge of the Supreme that He has created among the people. 'The nature made by God' means the ability of knowing the true faith that He has instilled in human being as He says: *And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say:* "*Allah.*" (31:25)"

(On *ḥanīf*, being upright, wholly:)

al-Rāghib also says:

> "*al-Ḥanf* means turning away from error towards rightfulness while *al-janf* means turning away from rightfulness towards error. Arabs describe one who had done the pilgrimage or has done circumcision as *ḥanīf* as an indication that he is following the tradition of Abraham. *Aḥnaf* means a person with a distortion in his foot. It is said that this usage of the word is based on *al-tafā'ūl* form of the word; it is also said that this usage is based on borrowing of the idea of simple deviation."

When Abraham exculpated from their polytheism and idols by saying: "O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up (with God)," he had done so by gradually expressing his inner dislike for a partner of God by saying: "I do not love the setting ones," and then indicated that worshiping idols was an error by saying: "If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people." After an explicit exculpation in his words: "O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up (with God)," Abraham returns to the absolute unity in lordship—that is, proving the lordship and worship for He who created the heavens and the earth—and denial of partnership from Him by saying: "Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth..."

'Turning of the face' is an indication of exclusive focus towards the Almighty God in worship for the act of veneration and dependency demands that the dependent slave should attach himself to his Lord with full force and determination, and pray to Him and refer to Him in all his activities—and no prayer or attention can happen except by turning the face towards Him. Therefore, 'turning of the face' is considered as an indication of worship in the sense of praying to and focusing on God.

Abraham describes his Lord—the Exalted God towards whom he turns

his face—by a quality that is incontestably unique: He originated the heavens and the earth. He has used the relative pronoun and the syndetic relative clause (that is, *lilladhī* (Him Who)) in order to prove the known entity so that no one is left in confusion. Therefore, he said: "to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth", that is, 'I have turned in my worship to One to whom every thing is linked in its origination and creation.' This is what is proven by him and by them above all others.

By adding the word: "*ḥanīf*—being upright, wholly", Abraham rejects all others whom they call as God's partners in the sense that he is turning towards Him away from others whereby denying any partnership for Him. He further affirms that by saying: "and I am not of the polytheists." So the import of his words staring with "I have turned..." is to prove the servitude towards Almighty God and to deny a partner for Him; this is very similar to the import of the noble creed of Islam: *lā ilāha illa 'llāh*—there is no god but God.

The letter *lām* in *lilladhī* is for end or goal and denotes the meaning of *ila* (to); the use of *lām* in the meaning of *ila* is common as seen in: *...whoever submits himself entirely to Allah...* (2:112); and And whoever submits himself wholly to Allah... (31:22).

Exclusively concentrating on the attribute of God as the Originator (*al-Fāṭir*) as opposed to *al-Bār, al-Khāliq* and *al-Badī'* (all eventually convey the meaning of creation), shows the preference that Abraham had for the concept of "the religion of *fiṭrah*, nature." The Noble Qur'an has repeated this description of the true faith as "the pure faith of Abraham" and "the religion of *fiṭrah*" in the meaning of the religion whose ideas and teachings emanate from nature of the human being and the manner of his creation that does not ever change. Verily religion is the path adopted in order to reach to the real success, and the real success refers to the desired end that an entity truly and actually seeks based on the way it was created and was equipped with the means of perfection. Never can a human being or anything else from the creation attain success if he seeks it by other than the way he was created or equipped for: he cannot attain success by abandoning food or marriage or total seclusion from the society since he has been equipped otherwise; nor can he succeed in flying like the bird or living under the sea like the fish because he is not equipped for it. So, the true religion is in accordance with the essence of *fiṭrah*, nature; and never can the holiness of Divinity guide a person (or any other potential creature obliged to follow the religion) to

a successful and blessed end without creating him accordingly or without equipping him with the means to reach the goal. Indeed the religion in the eyes of God is Islam: submission to God according to His guidance based on His creation.

وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ ۚ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِّي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ ۚ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ
بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا ۗ وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

(6:80) And his people disputed with him He said: "Do you dispute with me respecting Allah? And He has guided me indeed; and I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord pleases; My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge; will you not then mind?

(In these series of verses,) the Almighty has divided Abraham's arguments into two parts: in the first one, he initiated the discussion and argued against them; in the second one, the people initiated the discussion and argued against him when he repudiated their gods. The present verse: ("his people disputed with him") contains the second of the two parts of arguments.

The Almighty God does not mention the argument that had been presented to him but it is inferred to in His Word where He quotes Abraham: "I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him," This refers to their argument that it is necessary to worship their idols out of fear. We have mentioned earlier and will discuss further that the impulse in believing in the idols as gods and worshiping them was based on two factors: either fear of their displeasure and power (since they have control over the events of this world) or hope of blessings and success from them. The more compelling of these two in their hearts was the first one, that is, the fear. Why? Because people naturally consider what is in their hands of the material blessings and success as their property that they have acquired by their hard work in the process of their livelihood (in seeking wealth, position and status) or what they have come to own from affluent ancestor or good luck like one who has inherited wealth from a remote ancestor or found a treasure and owned it or became leader of his people in succession to his father.

So, the path of hope has lesser of an impact in pushing one towards worship; even the Muslims, with complete divine teachings at their disposal,

are influenced less by promise and good-tidings compared to the impact of threat and warning. Therefore, you see that the Qur'an, while describing the duties of the Prophets, mentions their warnings more than their good-tidings while both are part of their duties and the methods that they use for promoting the faith.

In short, in their argument with Abraham about their gods, his people chose the element of fear and warned him of the gods' power and displeasure, and advised him to adopt their path and stick to their way in seeking nearness to the gods, and to reject the lordship of the Almighty God and to only believe in Him as they believed in Him just as the final point for everything.

When Abraham realized that their statement can be divided into two parts: i) Rejecting the belief in the lordship of the Almighty God, and ii) Promoting the belief in the lordship of their gods, he disputed with them on both levels but in a way that the first one is dependent on the second.

In the argument that he presented to them about Almighty God, he says: "Do you dispute with me respecting God? And He has guided me indeed;" In other words: 'I am in a settled situation and have already been guided by my Lord when He made me aware of the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and thereby inspired to me the argument by which I can reject the lordship of others from the idols and the stars, and (made me aware) that I am in need of a Lord who manages my life; so it dawned upon me that He is the Only Lord who has no partner. Since He has guided me towards Himself, I don't need to heed to your argument and search for god-ship again since search is only relevant when a person is in search; and so search after reaching the goal is futile.'

This meaning comes to mind upon the initial reading of the verse. However, a deeper meaning manifests upon contemplation: Abraham's words: "and He has guided me indeed;" is an argument by guidance itself; in other words, guidance does not eliminate the need for an argument. This may be explained as follows: 'Verily, God has guided me by teaching me the argument on falsehood of lordship of others and proving His Lordship. The guidance itself is a proof that He is the Lord and there is no lord other than Him. Guidance to the Lord is part of the actions that reflect divinity. If the Almighty God had not been my Lord, He would not have guided me; instead the one who is the Lord would have provided guidance but God is the One Who guided me, therefore He is my Lord.'

It was not valid for them to say that the one who has taught you what you

know and inspired to you the argument is one of our gods because nothing will guide a person to something that is detrimental to it, destroys its name and denies its existence. So, the fact that Abraham was taught to reject the godship of idols cannot be attributed to any of them.

However, what they could have said or what they have actually said is as follows: (The knowledge and inspiration that you have received) is from the act of one of our idols who has done this to you out of his anger and displeasure by distancing you from the belief in our gods, inspiring these arguments to you since he found crookedness in your mind and soul. This is similar to what the people of ʿĀd said to Hūd when he called them towards belief in One God only and argued that it is God only in Whom they should place their hopes and One Whom they should fear, and that their gods can neither benefit them nor harm them. They responded to him by saying that one of our gods has deceived you maliciously as seen in their story narrated by the Almighty: "*And, O my people, ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him, He will send on you clouds pouring down abundance of rain and add strength to your strength, and do not turn back guilty.*" *They said: "O Hūd! You have not brought to us any clear argument and we are not going to desert our gods for your word, and we are not believers in you. We cannot say aught but that some of our gods have smitten you with evil." He said: "Surely I call Allah to witness, and do you bear witness too, that I am clear of what you associate* (*with God*) *besides Him, therefore scheme against me all together; then give me no respite,*" (11:52–55).

So, the statement of Abraham: "and I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord pleases;" rejects the dubious thought (of fearing the idols) and it is, at the same time, a complete argument in rejecting the lordship of their associate-gods.

The summary of his argument is as follows: 'You are calling me towards the belief in lordship of your associate-gods and the rejection of the lordship of my Lord by threatening me that your associate-gods will inflict harm upon me, and you are warning me by putting doubt in what I have been guided to. But I surely do not fear the gods that you associate with God because all of them are creatures managed (by Him), they don't possess any benefit nor any harm (for me), and since I don't fear them, your argument stumbles down and the doubt created by you evaporates.'

(Referring to: "unless my Lord pleases;" he says:) 'And if I fear them, this fear would not be from the doing of your associate-gods since they are

not capable of anything, rather it will be from the doing of my Lord and He would be the One Who pleased that I fear your associate-gods and so I fear them—this fear itself would be another proof of His Lordship and another sign from the signs of His Unity which compels one to exclusively worship Him, it cannot be a proof for the lordship of your associate-gods nor an argument compelling one to worship them.'

'The proof that the fear could be from my Lord is that: "my Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge;" He knows whatever of good and evil that occurs in His Kingdom which He has created for valid and solid purposes. So, how can it be possible that He knows about something that can benefit or harm but He is silent about it and does not confront it either by preventing it or by allowing it? Thus, if a fear comes into my heart, it is by God's will and permission as per His sublime status; and this itself would be a way to prove His Lordship and reject the lordship of others. "Will you not then mind" and reflect upon what you can comprehend by your intelligence and be guided to what your pure nature indicates?'

This is explanation of his argument when he says: "I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord pleases; My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge; will you not then mind?"

Based on the above, Abraham's statement: "I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him," is like an appendage to the argument: "Do you dispute with me respecting God? And He has guided me indeed." Nevertheless, at the same time, it is a complete argument in itself to deny the lordship of their associate-gods by not fearing them. Also, his statement that: "unless my Lord pleases," is an argument of a hypothetical nature: you are arguing for necessity of worshiping the idols out of fear while there is no fear in my heart; and if supposedly there were that fear in my heart, then that would be a proof for my Lord's godship and not for the lordship of your associate-gods since that fear would be from the will of my Lord. His statement: "My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge," explains the basis of the supposed fear—that also would be by God's will since the Creator of the heavens and the earth is not oblivious of whatever happens in His Kingdom, and so nothing happens but by His will as He is the one who manages it and sustains it. His statement: "will you not then mind," is a question coupled with rebuke, and it is an indication that the argument is based on pure nature.

The exegesis of the Qur'an have a variety of opinions about this verse:

As for the sentence: "Do you dispute with me respecting God? And He has guided me indeed;" most of them have mentioned first of the two explanations that we have given above which, in short, says that Abraham responds to their objection against God's unity by saying that he is not in need of arguing on this issue since God has guided him and with such a guidance, there is no need for arguments.

However, the apparent context of the verse(does not support this view) since Abraham was in the state of argumentation, and this means that his statement was an argument for monotheism, not that he was not in need of any arguments.

As for the sentence: "and I do not fear in any way those that you set up with Him, unless my Lord pleases;" they have explained the first part of this sentence almost similarly to what we have said above but they have given a different explanation for the latter part: "unless my Lord pleases." They have said: 'It means: I do not fear them except if my Lord overcomes these idols, and gives them life and power so that they can harm and benefit.' Of course, this ability to harm and benefit becomes a proof of their creation and a proof of the Almighty God's Unity. In other words, the meaning would be that I do not fear them at all except if my Lord decides to give life to these associate-gods so that they can then harm and benefit—then I will fear them. Nonetheless, the lordship will still belong to God and it will demonstrate that their associate-gods are created entities.

Although this explanation is closer to what we had said above, the attribution of benefit and harm to the associate-gods if they were alive

in their belief some of them are indeed alive such as the angels, gods of various categories, and some of them apparently harm and benefit such as the sun—goes against the divine teachings as the Qur'an clearly states that ultimately benefit and harm comes from none but the Almighty God.

Moreover, describing that as a proof that their associate-gods were created entities would have no impact on the idol-worshipers since they do not deny that idols and gods are creatures of God; and their belief in 'eternity' of some of their gods does not conflict, in their views, with them being dependent upon a truly Eternal God.

Another commentator says that the meaning of the latter part of this sentence is that 'I do not fear their associate-gods and exclude from the general fear a fear that might be created by my Lord to punish me for some of my sins or to inflict harm upon me initially.' In other words, the exceptional clause

(in the latter part of the sentence) is an exception to earlier part denying the fear of the associate-gods, and the words 'unless my Lord...' is an exception of fear in general. The meaning would be as follows: 'I do not fear the gods that you associate with God nor anything else except from the fear that my Lord may inflict upon me initially or as retribution—which I would fear.' There is no need to elaborate on the arbitrary nature of this argument.

As for His Word: "My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge," one of them has said that this is Abraham's praise for his Lord after completion of the argument. It is also said that it is an implied criticism of their idols since neither do they know nor feel anything. This explanation is rejected by the fact that an implied criticism by contrasting with God's power would be more appropriate to the situation than with His knowledge, and so what was the justification for moving from the power to the knowledge? This objection is also valid for the previous explanation (that is, if Abraham wanted to praise God, it would have been better to describe His power).

Another commentator said that since the Lord exempted Abraham from the distress that could have fallen upon him, he describes His knowledge of the unseen by the sentence: "My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge," and so He does not do anything but what is beneficial, good and wise. If this explanation were valid, then it would have been better for Abraham to describe His wisdom instead of His knowledge, at the least by combining wisdom with knowledge as it has occurred in many places.

Yet another commentator said that this sentence is like a justification for the exceptional clause and it means that God knew before hand that he could be inflicted with evil because of the idols (example, if He had willed that an idol fall down upon him and crush him or heat of the sun causes illness or kills him). However, describing the power and the wisdom would have been better justification than just talking about knowledge.

One of them said that it means that the knowledge of my Lord covers and encompasses everything, and His will is connected to His eternal and comprehensive knowledge, and His power generates His will; and, therefore, nothing from His creation that they worship can have any impact neither in His attributes nor in His actions that emanate from them, neither by intercession nor by any other means. Thus, that impact and effect could only exist if the Almighty God's knowledge did not encompass everything. Therefore the intercessor would be in a position to inform the Lord of the preferred action or inaction and that knowledge would have made it possible

for the intercessor to harm or benefit someone or to bestow or withdraw something. This commentator further says: "We have derived this meaning of the sentence from the Almighty's arguments on negation of polytheistic intercession by verses such as: *...who is he that can intercede with Him but by His Permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His Knowledge except what He pleases...* (2:255). He also said that this is the best of explanations on this verse and it is an example of the interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself. This is the summary of his arguments.

The conclusion of his view is that the verse: "My Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge," is an explanation and reason for total rejection of any fear from the gods and others as if Abraham said: "I don't fear any sort of fear from your gods and other creatures since my Lord knows everything and He will decides by His will and implements it by His power, and therefore He does not need any intercessor to inform Him of what He didn't know so that the intercessor could have any impact on the Almighty's actions and intercession."

You can realize that negating this impact as much as it depends on the Almighty God's vast knowledge also depends on absolute power and will—as such, the will is an attribute of action and not of person as this interpreter has assumed—so what would be the benefit of the comprehensive knowledge if His power and will is not absolute? This can be seen in his statement in which he explains the knowledge, the will and the power altogether.

In short, this interpretation is not valid on basis of vastness of knowledge alone, it can be conclusive if it were based on absoluteness of power and will as well. But the verse mentions vastness of knowledge only. His statement that the verses on intercession also indicate this meaning is not valid either: those verses actually prove intercession in the sense of intervention in causes by the Almighty God's permission, they do not negate intercession as surmised by the interpreter and so he has assumed that he is interpreting the Qur'an by the Qur'an! The attempt to negate the causes from the visible world is an unattainable task; and the Qur'an, from its beginning to its end, speaks about causality and confirms the general principle of cause and effect. This discussion has occurred many times in the previous volumes of this book.

وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ

بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا ۚ فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ ۖ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

(6:81) "And how should I fear what you have set up (with Him), while you do not fear that you have set up with Allah that for which He has not sent down to you any authority; which then of the two parties is surer of security, if you know?

Then Abraham approaches the idol worshipers with another argument that proves contradiction between their words and their actions. In other words, their action belies their statement which can be summarized as following: 'You are asking me to fear the idols that should not be feared while you yourselves do not fear the God who should be feared; so I am more secure than you if I disobey you and don't follow your command.

'What you are asking me to fear, they don't need to be feared because there is no evidence to prove that their smaller and bigger idols are independent in harming and benefitting so that one should fear them. As for your lack of fear regarding the one who should be feared, well, you yourselves have assigned partners to the Almighty God in lordship while God has not sent down any proof on which you can rely since creation and origination is from the Almighty God, to Him belongs the Kingdom and to Him belongs the command. If He had taken some of His creation as a partner unto Himself, making incumbent upon us to worship His partner, then it was upon Him, and not anyone else, to clarify the matter to us and show the reality in it. This could have been done by linking it with signs and proofs proving that He has partners in such and such issues, and that also either through revelation or through argument of tangible nature. And none of these exist.'

Based on this explanation, the words: "what you have set up (with Him)..." is contextually linked to the statement: "...for which He has not sent down to you any authority." However, this clause has come after the interjecting statement about them not fearing God for their polytheism because it was more appropriate at this place as is obvious. And His Word: "which then of the two parties is surer of security, if you know?" is the conclusion of the argument. All together, this is an argument against them in contradicting themselves by asking Abraham to fear their gods as they were asking him to fear something which should not be feared while they themselves do not fear God who should be actually feared.

It is clear from the above that the clause about idol worshiping: "...for which He has not sent down to you any authority" is just a hypothetical

statement as required by the type of argument used in the discussion, it is not a real concept. In other words, it does not prove the possibility that God could allow assigning of partners to Himself who could then be worshiped. No, not all. This clause is similar to our day-to-day conversation when we say: 'You don't have any evidence to prove your claim' in response to a person who threatens us with a superstitious issue claiming that it could benefit or harm us. As followers of *tawḥīd*, we can present this statement as follows: 'God has not sent down any evidence.'

Based on analytical logic, the statement in the verse could be presented as *qiyās istithnā'ī* (that is, a mixed hypothetical syllogism in modus tollen form) in which the first conditional premise has an exceptional clause in order to prove the second premise. For example, we can say:

'If God had sent down a proof that the idols have power to harm, then your fear of the idols would be valid.

'God has not sent down any proof. 'Therefore, your fear of the idols is invalid.'

And it is known that there is no reality in the first premise of this argument. So there is no need to say that the conditional clause: 'He has not sent down any authority' is for sarcasm or that it is for indication that this was an essential condition for idol-worshiping similar to the verse: *And whoever invokes with Allah another god—he has no proof of this...* (23:117), or other such assumptions.

The *bā* in the sentence: *lam yunazzil bihi* is in the meaning of 'with' or 'for'. Abraham has described them and himself as "the two parties" and did not say: "You and me" or something similar to it in order to refrain from any provocation of prejudice or egoism, and in order to show that the difference and separation between the two is in fundamental issue and the basic tenet of the faith which cannot be mixed in any way.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

(6:82) "Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice, those are they who shall have the security and they are those who go aright."

While presenting his argument in the previous verse, Abraham had

asked them who is worthy of having security: "*...which then of the two parties is surer of security, if you know?*" Then he responded to them since the answer was obvious in which the two parties cannot differ—a response of this nature cannot be delayed by the questioner waiting for the respondent since the respondent does not oppose the questioner in this matter and so there was no fear of rebuttal from him.

The Almighty God has narrated their confession in this matter in the story of the breaking of the idols: *He said: "Surely* (*some doer*) *has done it; the chief of them is this, therefore ask them, if they can speak." Then they turned to themselves and said: "Surely you yourselves are the unjust." Then they were made to hang down their heads (saying): "Certainly you know that they do not speak."* (21:63–65)

The context shows that this verse is the statement of Abraham. And the view that this could be the statement of his people or that it is the Almighty God's statement as a judgement between the two opposing parties—the context does not support this view at all.

In any case, the verse contains a strong emphasis (on security for the believers) as reflected in multiple predicates in the nominal clause such as: "they who shall have the security" a nominal clause which is a predicate of "those" and all together they form a nominal clause and are a predicate for "those who believe..." Similarly, the sentence following "those who shall have the security", that is, "they are those who are aright" is a nominal clause. It concludes that those who believe and have not mixed up their faith with injustice are undoubtedly deserving of security and guidance. There is no doubt in this.

There is no ambiguity in the conclusion of the verse that security and guidance are from fruits of the faith provided it is not mixed with injustice. *al-Lubs* or *al-labs* means covering, concealing as al-Rāghib has mentioned in his *al-Mufradāt:* "The origin of *al-labs* means concealing." (In this verse,) it has been used metaphorically in order to show that this "injustice" does not negate the root of faith since it is part of human nature that cannot be totally eradicated, rather injustice conceals it, nullifies its impact and does not let it manifest its right effect.

al-ẓulm (injustice) means moving away from the equilibrium of justice. Although the word has occurred in this verse as an indefinite noun in a negative context implying a general meaning that cannot be associated with faith (*īmān*) in any shape or form, but the context shows that the injustice that

prevents the manifestation of faith and of its desired, good, results is a kind of injustice which has a negative impact upon faith and not the injustice which has no impact upon it.

Indeed *al-ẓulm* in its first impression in people's mind refers to the social injustice: violation of the social right by taking away a person's life or his honor or his property without any legitimate reason. But then the people extended its meaning and named every violation of law or social norm as injustice; rather any sin or disobedience of a legislative order was known as injustice committed by the sinner in regard to himself. Furthermore, disobeying the Almighty God (since He has the legitimate right of obedience) or opposing the religious duties was also known as injustice even if it was done by mistake or out of forgetfulness or ignorance—even though such a violator of duties was not to be punished. In addition to all this, even ignoring an advice and the Divine recommendations unknowingly is considered as being unjust to oneself. This also covers a person who was negligent in following the health guidelines or ignored the effective ways of improving his health. The basis of expanding the meaning of *ẓulm* was analysis of the cause of violation.

In short, the meaning of *ẓulm* has been expanded greatly but not all its applications have negative impact on the faith. Those applications of *ẓulm* that do not cover sins and disobedience of divine orders such as the acts committed by mistake or out of forgetfulness or ignorance—do not have any impact on the faith whose function is to bring a person closer to bliss and true success by the pleasure of the Lord, the Almighty. Such things have no impact on the faith.

So, His Word: "Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice, those are they who shall have the security" means that the faith which gives security—against every sin and disobedience that hinders its effect—is dependent on absence of injustice.

However, herein is the fine point of reflection: the intentional sin (that we discussed fully at the end of 12th (Eng.) volume of this book) is of a variety of degrees depending on the difference in perspectives. An intentional sin may be considered *ẓulm* in views of one people but not by another.

So, a person who is at the crossroad of monotheism and polytheism, and then believes that the world has a Creator who has brought forth its various components, divided its various parts, and has kept its earth and sky apart, and considers himself and other creatures as being sustained and nurtured by

Him, and that the real human life can only be attained by believing in Him and submitting to Him—the obstinate *ẓulm* for such a person is ascribing partners to God and believing in other gods like the idols, the stars, etc. as shown by Abraham in his previous statement: *And how should I fear what you have set up* (*with Him*)*, while you do not fear that you have set up with Allah that for which He has not sent down to you any authority...*

A person who has treaded this path and believes in God alone, when he is confronted with the injustice of the major sins (such as causing distress to the parents, devouring an orphan's wealth, killing an innocent soul, committing adultery and drinking intoxicants), he knows that the manifestation of good results of his faith depends on refraining from this kind of injustice. God has promised him to forgive the minor sins if he refrains from the major ones: *If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your* (*small*) *sins and cause you to enter an honourable place of entering;* (4:31). Losing this result of faith is the misfortune of being chastised for these sins even though this will not be the everlasting chastisement like the chastisement of idol-worshiping (*shirk*), rather it will eventually come to an end either when its term expires or through intercession, etc.

Whoever acquires this level of righteousness and attains a share of awareness of his Lord's status, he recognizes a higher form of injustice such as doing the disliked (*makrūh*) actions, neglecting the recommended (*mustaḥab*) deeds and indulging in the permissible (*mubāh*) activities. A level higher than this would be the injustice of neglecting the noble traits and spiritual potentials in one's self. At even a higher level, the barriers in the path of love for God and seeking His nearness are considered as injustice.

So, faith (*īmān*) at all these various stages gives security to the faithful one and keeps misfortune away from him provided he refrains from that same level of injustice (*ẓulm*).

Therefore, the term *ẓulm* in the verse: "those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice" is of general import but its application varies depending on the difference in the level of faith. However, since the context of Abraham's statement was of debate against the idol-worshipers, the *ẓulm* here would refer to the *ẓulm* of polytheism only; and the "security" which follows this faith is the security against the fear of perpetual misery and everlasting chastisement. Nonetheless, the message of the verse is independent from its context and explains that security and guidance are indeed results of faith provided it is devoid of all types of injustice that conceal its impact

as mentioned earlier.

As for the *īmān* (faith) mentioned in the verse, it is of a general type and it means the belief in divinity, a belief that can be conditional to what preserves it or what destroys it. When it is contextualized by the words: "and do not mix up their faith with injustice," it refers to belief in divinity of God and rejection of associate-gods. In the previous verse, Abraham quoted the idol-worshipers' statement about their associate-gods and belief in them even though they were God's creation as a statement that has no proof or authorization from God, and that by believing in their associate-gods, they are seeking to avert evil and misery even though they cannot harm nor benefit anyone. Whereas Abraham fears and believes in Him Who is his Creator Who provides guidance and manages the universe with His command and will in all issues because of His comprehensive knowledge. Then he asked the question: which of the two parties is worthier for security and success by belief in the Lord: both parties believe in the Lord but with a major difference—one believes in a Lord based on proof and the other believes in a Lord without any proof, rather the proof is against them.

It is, therefore, clear that the meaning of *īmān* in "those who believe" is the general belief in divinity which has been further restricted by the words: "and do not mix up their faith with injustice," thus focusing on the belief in Almighty God which is the true belief. Think and reflect.

So, the following points became clear from the above:

Firstly, the faith in this verse refers to the faith in the Divinity and not the faith in the Creator of the universe—the opponents were not atheists but polytheists.

Secondly, the injustice mentioned in this verse is of general type that can harm the faith and corrupt it by sins. Similarly, the security mentioned in this verse is a general security from misery of disobedience and sins. "To go aright" is also of general nature and it means to be free from misguidance, even though contextually it is applied to the misguidance of polytheism.

Thirdly, the term injustice is also general depending on the different levels of faith (*īmān*).

While talking about the general meaning of *ẓulm,* a commentator says:

> The security mentioned in the verse is restricted for those who believe and do not mix their faith with injustice. If the general meaning is applied without considering the context of faith, then the meaning will be as following: Those who believe and do not mix

> their faith with any kind of injustice—neither against themselves nor against their *īmān*, neither against their physical and psychological actions of religious or worldly nature nor against other creatures from the intelligent beings or non-intelligent beings—such people shall have security against God's religious punishment for sins and evil deeds as well as from His worldly punishment for not observing the norm in the chain of cause-and-effect (e.g., poverty, diseases, illnesses, etc.). This security will not cover those who are unjust to themselves or others since the unjust would have no security; actually, every unjust person will face punishment even though the Almighty God, out of His vast mercy, will not punish every unjust person for every injustice, rather He will forgive many of the sins of this world; and He will punish whomsoever He wants and forgive whomsoever He wants in the hereafter with the exception of shirk (idol-worshiping).

He further says:

> This meaning of the verse is right by itself; and it follows that no responsible person should feel general amnesty from all types of fears (religious and worldly chastisement or legal and natural punishment) except the fear of the awe and majesty of the Almighty that is the hallmark of those who have attained the level of perfection.

He also said:

> If the meaning of security is not applied generally then the meaning of the verse would be that those who believe and do not mix their faith with the great injustice (that is, *shirk*—ascribing partners to God), they shall have security from the religious chastisement (which is related to the principles of faith): perpetuity in the abode of chastisement. In the world, they shall be in the state of fear and hope. He then concludes that the apparent meaning of the verse denotes the general meaning, and has based his argument on the understanding of the Prophet's companions who said that when the verse was revealed, it created extreme anxiety among the people and they said: "O Messenger of God! Who among us has not been unjust to himself?" He informed them that the injustice (in the verse) refers to shirk. The context of the verse also perhaps indicates this as well as the fact that its subject is *īmān*, faith. This was the summary of his statement.

There are several problems with this interpretation:

Firstly, what he has tried to prove from the understanding of the companions does not correlate to the meaning that he has presented: what they understood from injustice was equal to sins and disobedience whereas what he has presented is broader than that in meaning.

Secondly, what he has proven as the general injustice (even in cases that are not really in the list of sins), and then judged it to be a correct interpretation is actually far-fetched from the meaning of the verse. The verse intends to say that security and guidance are effects of the faith, provided it is not tainted with injustice that engulfs it and neutralizes its effect. This injustice is indeed the act of disobedience in form of sins. However, what is not considered a sin—for example, inadvertently eating a food that is harmful to the bodily health—obviously does not neutralize the effect of the faith, that is, security and guidance. The verse does not speak about the effects of injustice outside the context of faith as the Almighty said: *those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice* in which He has made faith (*īmān*) the subject and tied it to absence of injustice, and made security and guidance as its effects; He did not make injustice the subject so that the verse would be expected to explain its effects. The verse intends to enumerate the effects that emerge from the true faith; whereas injustice—with its very vast subject and its ensuing effects—is not subject of the verse at all. Therefore, his statement that 'this meaning of the verse is correct by itself' is positively invalid.

Thirdly, his statement that: 'And it follows that no responsible person should feel general amnesty from all types of fears' is a clear confession that there is no application for the general meaning of security, and its necessary conclusion is that his statement loses its validity. What is the benefit of a statement in supporting arguments that has no application?

Fourthly, the meaning that he has finally chosen, that is, injustice refers to the specific injustice of *shirk*, is not valid either since the wording in the verse is general. Of course, it says that faith should not be tainted with shirk so that it does not obstruct its impact but that is an example of applying a general term to a specific case. But to take a specific meaning from a general word—without any circumstantial or verbal, attached or detached, indication—is not acceptable in the art of eloquence. This is obvious. As for the Prophet's statement that he has quoted: 'This refers to *shirk*'; this does not clearly indicate that *shirk* is the literal meaning of the verse and its application. We shall discuss this further, God willing, in the section of Traditions.

وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ ۚ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَنْ نَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾

(6:83) And that was Our argument which we gave to Abraham against his people; We exalt in ranks whom We please; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing:

The use of *tilka* (that) for indicating something from a distance (instead of "this") denotes eminence and greatness for the argument since it is a convincing argument based on nature and whose premises are derived from it.

We exalt in ranks whom We please: The term *darajāt* (translated as "ranks") was initially used for steps of the ladder and then its usage was expanded and was applied for levels of perfection in moral arena such as knowledge, faith, honour and dignity, etc. God's act of exalting whomever He pleases in ranks means that He bestows a person with moral perfection and real virtues in qualities that are humanly attainable such as knowledge and piety as well as qualities that are humanly non-attainable (rather they are bestowed by Divine Grace) such as prophethood, messengership, sustenance, etc.[1]

Although the term *darajāt* has occurred as an indefinite noun, in a general sense, it is nonetheless certain contextually that it refers to the ranks of knowledge and guidance. God has indeed exalted Abraham by guiding him, showing him the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, giving him conviction, decisive arguments and knowledge. While talking about the ranks of knowledge, the Almighty says: *Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high rank...* (58:11).

The verse ends with the words: "surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing," in order to emphasize that all this was done by the wisdom of the Almighty and His knowledge just as the arguments that He had given to the Messenger of God as mentioned earlier in this chapter before these arguments were based on His, the Sublime's Wisdom and Knowledge.

Finally, the change in this verse from the first person to third person

1 Adding 'sustenance' alongside prophethood and messengership might seem odd but it refers to the Islamic belief of Divine Decree about the means and maximum limit of sustenance (*rizq*)—that is entirely at God's discretion and not fully result of the human exertions. (Trans.)

(while talking about Abraham) was done in order to please the heart of the Holy Prophet and to confirm the matters discussed in here.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣadūq narrates in *al-ʿUyūn* from Nuʿaym b. ʿAbdillāh b. Tamīm al-Qarashī, may God be pleased with him, said: My father narrated to me from Ḥamdān b. Sulaymān al-nayshābūrī from ʿAli b. Muḥammad b. al-Jahm who said that he attended the gathering of al-Maʾmūn while al-Riḍā was with him. al-Maʾmūn said to him: "O Son of the Messenger of God! Do you believe that the prophets are infallible?" He (Imām) said: "Yes." Then al-Maʾmūn asked him about some Qur'anic verses on this issue, and among those questions that he asked him was the following: "Can you tell me about the Word of God, to Whom belong Mighty and Majesty, about Abraham: *So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; he said: 'This is my Lord.'*" al-Riḍā said:

"Verily Abraham found himself among three groups of people: a group that worshiped Venus, a group that worshiped the moon and a group that worshiped the sun; and this was at that time when he came out from the den in which he was hidden. When the night overshadowed him, he saw the Venus and said: 'This is my Lord' in order to negate and inquire about it. And when it set down, he said: 'I do not love the setting ones' because setting was a quality of the created being and not a quality of the Eternal God. When he saw the moon rising, he said: 'This is my Lord' in order to negate and inquire about it. And when it set down, he said: 'If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be of the erring people.' Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: 'This is my Lord, this is bigger than the Venus and the moon' in order to negate and inquire about it, not for accepting. And when it also set, then he addressed all the three groups (worshipers of the Venus, the moon and the sun): 'O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up (with God). Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.' Abraham only said what he said in order to show them the falsity of their belief and to prove to them that worship of entities that have the (setting) quality of the Venus, the moon and the sun is not

valid, and that worship is valid for their Creator and Creator of the heavens and the earth. Moreover, he had argued against his people by what God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, has inspired to him as He said: And that was Our argument which we gave to Abraham against his people." al-Ma'mūn said: "May God keep you long, O son of the Messenger of God!" (*'Uyūn al-akhbār al-Riḍā*)

Author's comment: This narration, with its contents, clearly supports a number of points that we derived from the context of the holy verses. Some other supporting narrations will come below. As for what the narration says about Abraham's statement: 'This is my Lord' that it was actually in order to negate and inquire rather than to inform and agree this is one of the ways of interpretation of the verses that was presented by the Imām in order to reject the argument of al-Ma'mūn, and that does not contradict the other ways of its interpretation, if there are any, as we shall see later on.

The Imām's statement "setting was a quality of the created being" does not necessarily mean that the argument is based on "setting quality" of the created being as some have mentioned since it is possible that the argument was based on "not loving" and that in turn was based on the phenomenon of setting as a quality of the created being which cannot be an object of love. Think and ponder.

(2) al-Ṣadūq narrates from his father and Ibn al-Walīd who both narrate from Sa'd from Ibn Burayd from Ibn Abī 'Umayr from Hishām b. Sālim from Abū Baṣīr from Abū 'Abdillāh who said: "The father of Abraham was an astrologer of Nimrod (Nimrod) b. Kan'ān; and Nimrod did not do anything but after consulting him. So, he looked at the stars, in one of the nights, and in the morning, he reported to Nimrod: 'I saw last night something surprising!' Nimrod asked: 'What was it?' He said: 'I saw a child being born in our land in whose hands will be our destruction; and it will not be long before he is conceived.' Nimrod was surprised by this and asked: 'Has he already been conceived by a woman?' He replied: 'No.' Part of the knowledge that was given to the astrologer was that the fire will burn that child but he was not told that God will rescue him from it." The Imām then continued: "The women were then separated from their husbands so that no one could be conceived. However, Abraham's father met his wife and Abraham was conceived. He thought that this is the child and so he sent for the mid-wives to

come and check his wife. The Almighty God made the foetus cling to the back and the midwives said: 'We don't see anything in her womb.' Finally, when Abraham's mother gave birth, his father decided to take him to Nimrod. His wife pleaded: 'Don't take your son to Nimrod so that he may kill him. Let me take him to some cave and place him in it until he dies; don't be the one to have killed your own son!' He said: 'So go.' She took him to a cave, nursed her (and placed him inside) and put a stone on the cave's entrance and left him. So, God placed his sustenance in his thumb; whenever he would suck it, milk will come out of it; he would develop in one day like others develop in one week, and he would develop in one week like others develop in one month, and he would grow in one month like others grow up in one year. He stayed as long as God wanted him to stay (in the cave).

"Then his mother told his father: 'Would you allow me to go to that child and see what happened to him?' He allowed her. She went to the cave and saw Abraham with his eyes lightening up like two lamps; she picked him, held him to her chest and nursed her. Then she went back to her home. His father inquired about him. She said: 'I have buried him in the ground.' She would go outside on the pretext of having work to do and then go to Abraham, hold him, nurse him and returns home. Once he started moving, his mother went to visit him as usual. When she started to leave, he got hold of her dress. She said: 'What is the matter?' He said: 'Take me with you.' She said: 'I will have to ask your father.'

"So, Abraham continued to stay in *ghaybah*, hidden physically, concealing his reality until he made his appearance with truth by God's command and God manifested His powers in him." (*Kamāl al-dīn wa tamām al-niʿmah*)

Author's comment: (al-Rāwandī) the author of *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* has quoted the same narration from al-Ṣadūq from his father and Ibn al-Walīd taking the chain of narration all the way to Abū Baṣīr from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) who said: "Āzar, the uncle of Abraham, was an astrologer of Nimrod who did not do anything but after consulting him, said: 'Verily, last night, I saw something strange!' Nimrod said: 'What was that?' He said: 'I saw a child being born in our land in whose hands will be our destruction.' So, he separated the men from the women; and Tārikh (Abraham's

father) had (before that) slept with the mother of Abraham who became pregnant…" Then he continued the ḥadīth to the end.

The unity in the chain of narrators of both narrations as well as the content of both (with exception about the father vis-à-vis uncle of Abraham) led the author of *al-Biḥār* to write: "It seems that what ar- Rāwandī has narrated is the same narration (as that of al-Ṣadūq) but he has changed (the issue of Abraham's father) in order to bring it in line with the principles of the (Shīʿah) Imāmiyyah." Then al-Majlisī (the author of *al-Biḥār*) has explained this narration and other similar narrations that talk about Āzar the idol-worshiper as Abraham's father as narrations based on *al-taqiyyah* (dissimulation).

A similar ḥadīth has been narrated by al-Qummī in his *al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr*, and it has been narrated in Sunnī sources from Mujāhid by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tarīkh* and from other sources by al-Thaʿlabī in *Qiṣaṣ al-anibyā'*.

At the least, one thing worth mentioning is that the scholars of ḥadīth and history are unanimous that Abraham, during his early years, was hidden in the cave out of fear that King Nimrod would kill him. Then he came out of the cave and argued against his father and his people about the issue of idols, the Venus, the moon and the sun, and also argued against the King's claim of divinity. The context of the verses supports this aspect of the narration.

As for the father of Abraham: The historians have written that his name was Tārikh or Tāriḥ, and Āzar was either his title or name of an idol or a positive nickname ('the helper') or a negative nickname ('the lame') in their language given by Abraham to him.

They have mentioned that this idol-worshiper named by the Qur'an as Abraham's father against whom he argued was Tārikh, his biological father and his true parent. This is supported by a number of the scholars of ḥadīth and theology from among the Sunnīs but has been rejected by a group of their scholars as well as the Shīʿahs who are almost united against it except for what is seen among some *muḥaddithīn* who have included such narrations in their books. The best argument that the opponents—that is, those who say that the idol-worshiper Āzar was not Abraham's father rather he was his uncle or his maternal grandfather—are the narrations that have come from both schools of thought that the ancestors of the Holy Prophet) were all monotheists and that none among them was an idol-worshiper. The debates between the two groups have continued.

Author's comment: The discussion of this nature—in whatever way it ends up—is outside the scope of the discussion of Qur'anic exegesis. Although the scholars from both groups are in need of presenting their ḥadīth-based proofs and deriving the right conclusion from them but we are not in need of them because the Qur'anic verses, as discussed earlier, prove that Āzar, the idol-worshiper, whom God has mentioned in these verses of sūrah of al-Anʿām was not the real father of Abraham. The narrations that say that Āzar was Abraham's real father—with all the contradictions that are in the narrations—are against the Holy Book and do not deserve any attention. So, there is no need to explain them away as narrations based on *taqiyyah* with all the difference among the Sunnīs themselves.

(3) ʿAli b. Ibraḥīm al-Qummī, under the verse: *And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth...* says: "My father narrated to me from Ishmael b. Marār from Yūnus b. ʿAbdu al-Raḥmān from Hishām from Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) who said: "He opened for him what is on the earth and those who are on it; what is on the heaven and those who are on it and the angel who carries it; and the throne and those who are on it. He similarly did this for His Messenger and the Chief of the Believers (ʿAli)." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: A similar narration has been quoted in *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* by two chains of ʿAbdullāh b. Muskān and Abū Baṣīr from al-Ṣādiq and by a chain of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān from al-Bāqir; and al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it from Zurārah and Abū Baṣīr from al-Ṣādiq and from Zurārah and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qaṣīr from al-Bāqir; and (the Sunnī commentator, al-Suyūṭī, has) narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid and al-Suddī from the earlier commentators.

While talking about the Throne (*al-ʿArsh*), we shall soon discuss the ḥadīth of ʿAli about *al-ʿArsh* that has been narrated in *al-Kāfī*. He says in it: "Those who carry the Throne and those who are around it are the divine scholars to whom God bestowed His knowledge." Then he said: "This is the Kingdom that God shows to His chosen ones, and showed it to His friend (Abraham) as He said: *And thus did We show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure.*" This ḥadīth has commentary on other issues that have come in exegesis of 'showing the Kingdom' and confirmation of what we said earlier. God willing, the full explanation of this ḥadīth will come in sūrah of al-Aʿrāf (ch.7).

(4) al-ʿAyyāshī in his *tafsīr* narrates from Abū Baṣīr from Abū ʿAbdillāh

(al-Ṣādiq) who said: "When Abraham saw the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, he saw a person committing adultery so he invoked evil upon him and the person died, then he saw another person (in the same state) and he invoked evil upon him and he also died, and then he saw three persons (in the same state) and invoked evil upon them and they died as well. So, God revealed to him: 'O Abraham, your prayers are answered, so do not invoke evil upon My servants; if I wished, I would not have created them (in the first place). I have created my servants in three categories: a person who worships Me and does not associate anyone with Me; a person who worships other than Me but He can never escape from Me; and a person who worships other than Me but in his loins is one who will worship only Me (and so I spare him).' "(*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: This is a *mustafīḍah* narration,[1] and al-Kulaynī has narrated it in *al-Kāfī* with a full chain from Abū Baṣīr from the Imām; al-Ṣadūq has narrated it in *Ilal al-sharāyi* from the Imām; and al-Ṭabrisī has narrated it in *al-Iḥtijāj* from al-'Askarī. (Among Sunnī commentators,) al-Suyūṭī has narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn Marduwayh from 'Ali from the Holy Prophet, and (in another chain) from Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh. al-Bayhaqī has narrated it in *Shu'ab al-īmān* from the chain of Sharḥ b. Ḥawshab from Ma'ādh b. Jabal from the Holy Prophet and from a number of commentators without full chain of narrators.

al-'Ayyāshī narrates in his *al-Tafsīr* from Muḥammad b. Muslimfrom one of the two Imāms (al-Bāqir or al-Ṣādiq) who said about Abraham when he saw the star: "He was looking for his Lord andhad not disbelieved; and anyone from the people who thinks like that (that is, is in search of the truth), he is like him."

(5) al-Qummī in his *al-Tafsīr* says that Abū 'Abdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) was asked about Abraham's statement: "*This is my Lord.*" Did he commit *shirk* by his statement: "This is my Lord?" He said: "Whoever says that today is a polytheist; but in case of Abraham, there was no *shirk* since he was seeking his Lord. However, that statement from someone else would be *shirk*."

Author's comment: The opposite of the seeker of the truth is some- one

1 If a *khabar wāḥid* has multiple narrators, it is known as *mustafīḍah* narration and its status is elevated closer to that of the *mutawātir ḥadīth*. (Trans.)

for whom the guidance and clear proof has been established; such a person cannot just suppose something as god that *shirk*.

(6) al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr* narrates from Ḥujr who said that al-ʿAlāʾ b. Sayyābah sent someone with a question to Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) about Abraham's statement: 'This is my Lord': "If someone says this now, he is considered by us as a polytheist." He said: "It was not shirk in case of Abraham since he was in search of his Lord. From other than him, it would be *shirk*."

(7) He (al-ʿAyyāshī) also narrates from Muḥammad b. Ḥumrān who asked Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) concerning God's statement about what Abraham said: "This is my Lord." He said: "He didn't reach to anything (of *shirk*); he intended something other than what he said." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: Perhaps the Imām meant that by saying: "This is my Lord" Abraham did not mean anything more than the worditself and did not have any other meaning beyond that. In other words, he said it as a hypothetical statement or accepted the premises in orderto prove its falsity as mentioned earlier (in the commentary).

(8) al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-manthūr* under verse: *Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice*, says that Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Dārquṭnī in al-Afrād, Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh have quoted from ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd who said: "When the verse: *Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice*, was revealed, it distressed the people and they said: 'O Messenger of God! Who among us has not being unjust to himself?' He said: 'It is not what you think; have you not heard the virtuous servant saying that: Verily, polytheism (*shirk*) is the great injustice? It is indeed shirk.'

Author's comment: 'The virtuous servant' refers to Luqmān as God has quoted him in sūrah of Luqmān (ch.31). This ḥadīth shows that the sūrah of al-Anʿām was revealed after the sūrah of Luqmān. We have mentioned earlier that explaining the term 'injustice' as *shirk* is actually applying its most appropriate example and that *shirk* is an unforgiveable sin unlike any other sin whatever it may be. The proof for what we have said will come in the narrations (below).

(9) al-Suyūṭī says that Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-īmān* have narrated from

Jarīr b. ʿAbdillāh who said: "We departed with the Messenger God from Medina when a rider appeared towards us. When he came close, he greeted us. The Holy Prophet said to him: "From where do you come?" He said: "I am coming from my family, my children and my tribe seeking the Messenger of God." He (the Prophet) said: "You have found him." The person said: "Teach me what is the faith (*īmān*)?" The Holy Prophet said: "Testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; and establish the prayer, give the charity, fast in Ramaḍān and do the pilgrimage of (God's) House." He said: "I accept."

Then his camel's forelimb went into the rats' hole and he fell over with his head down and died. The Messenger of God said: "He is of those who did a little (as far as deeds are concerned) but will be rewarded abundantly; he is from those whom God had described as: "*Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice—they are those who shall have security and they are those who go aright.*" I saw wide eyed houris putting a fruit of Paradise into his mouth, and so I came to know that the person had died hungry." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: al-Suyūṭī has also narrated this from al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī[1] and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn ʿAbbās a similar narration; al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated the same in his *al-Tafsīr* from Jābir al-Juʿfī from an unnamed person from the Holy Prophet.

(10) al-Suyūṭī also says that ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd has narrated from Abraham al-Taymī that a person asked the Holy Prophet about this verse but he was silent till a person came and accepted Islam and didn't live long before he joined a battle in which he was martyred. The Holy Prophet said: "This person is among: *those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice.*"

(11) al-Suyūṭī says that al-Fāriyābī, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Abī Ḥātim,Abu al-Shaykh, al-Ḥākim (who has even authenticated the narration) and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib about the verse: " *those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice*"

1 al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was a Ḥanafī Sūfī scholar, not be confused with al-Tirmidhī, the famous compiler of *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, one of the six canonical compilations of ḥadīth among the Sunnīs. (Trans.)

who said: "This verse was revealed about Abraham and his companionsespecially, and it is not for this *ummah*."

Author's comment: This narration does not conform to the general principles derived from the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. Verily the verse does not contain any special command specific to one community and not the other like the practical laws legislated for one era and not the other. As for the faith (*īmān*) with its effects on different levels as well as the injustice (*ẓulm*) on different levels (affecting the *īmān* negatively), this is an issue bestowed in the human nature with no difference in time or nations.

Some commentators have tried to explain this *ḥadīth* by saying that perhaps he meant that God has specifically granted to Abraham and his people a security against the general chastisement of the hereafter and not just the security against perpetuity in it. Probably the reason for this exclusivity—if it were valid—is that the Almighty God did not impose upon them anything but monotheism leaving the matters of laws to their strict civil system in matters of personal and behavioral laws.

Researchers have discovered the Code of Hammurabi, the righteous king who lived during Abraham's era and whom he welcomed and took one-tenth tax from him as it has been mentioned in the Book of Genesis (in the Old Testament); and so the Code is similar to the Torah in most of its laws. As for God introducing the ritual *ḥajj* through Abraham, that was only for the people among the descendants of his son Ishmael and not among his Chaldean people. As for this *ummah*: its followers of *tawḥīd* will still be punished for sins according to their level of gravity since they were charged with a complete code of law and will be accountable for its implementation. Here ends the commentator's argument.

There is obvious arbitrariness in his argument. We have already mentioned earlier that King Hammurabi lived in the beginning of the year 1700 BC while Abraham lived approximately in the beginning of 2000 BC.

Hammurabi was a good king in his own religion, just to his people, practically committed to the laws that he legislated, diligently imposed the laws in his domain in the best way, and, as it is said, they were the earliest civil laws—in spite of all this, he was an idol-worshiper and sought help from the gods of idol-worshipers as he himself wrote after completing his Code as seen in the tablet discovered in the ruins of Babylon. Those gods he mentioned in his statement at the end of the Code, he thanked them for granting him the great kingdom and made him successful in spreading justice and laying

down the laws. The gods that he prayed for their help in preserving the laws from distortion are Mīrudākh, the god of gods and god of law and justice, Zamāmā and Ishtār, the gods of war, Shāmāsh, the god who maintains justice in the sky and the earth, Sīn, the god of the heavens, Ḥādād, the god of fertility, Nīrghāl, the god of victory, Bal, the god of destiny, and other gods like Biyltīs, Nino, Sājīlā, etc.

Moreover, what the commentator has said that God did not impose on Abraham's people anything but monotheism leaving thematters of laws to their strict civil system is rejected by the Qur'anic narrations which talks about Abraham's prayer (as seen in his prayers inthe sūrah of Ibraḥīm (ch.14)), it mentions how God revealed to himthe doing of good deeds and giving charity (as seen in the sūrah of al-Anbiyā (ch.21)), and legislated *ḥajj* and permissibility of cattle's meat(as seen in the sūrah of al-Ḥajj (ch.22)). Part of his sharīʿah was also the disassociation with the idol-worshipers (as seen in the sūrah of al-Mumtaḥinah (ch.60)), and he used to prohibit every kind of injustice that was against human nature (as seen in the Sūrah al-Anʿām (ch.6), etc.). Also, part of Abraham's sharīʿah was physical purity (as seen in the sūrah of al-Ḥajj (ch.22)), and there are narrations that he introduced the *ḥanīfiyyah* tradition which consists often things: five related to the head and five related to the body, including circumcision. He used to greet by the greeting of peace (as seen in the Sūrah al-Hūd (ch.11) and Sūrah Maryam (ch.19)).

God, the Sublime, has indeed said that: *...the faith of your father, Abraham...* (22:78) and: *Say: "Nay!* (We follow) *the religion of Abraham, the upright one..."* (2:135), whereby He has described Islam, with its doctrines and practices, as the religion of Abraham. Although this does not mean that Islam with its elaborate code of law was introduced from days of Abraham—rather the reality is contrary to that as mentioned in: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus...* (42:13)—it proves that God's laws are based on a principle or general principles that emanate from the nature: whatever conforms to it is subject to commandments and whatever does not conform to it is subject of prohibitions. After mentioning the arguments against shirk, and some general commandments and prohibitions, the Almighty God addresses His Prophet as follows: *Say: "Surely,* (*as for*) *me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path;* (*to*) *a most right religion, the faith of Abraham the upright one,*

and he was not of the polytheists." (6:161)

If what the above-mentioned commentator has said was the fact that God did not lay down any code of law for Abraham and his people, rather He left them to the prevailing civil laws of the time, that is, the Code of Hammurabi—then that Code would be endorsed and valid in God's eyes, and would be part of Abraham's religion, and so shall the Islamic faith (that has been described in the Qur'an as the pure religion of Abraham) (be linked to the Code of the idol-worshiping king) thus making it one of the Divine faiths with a revealed scripture! The undeniable truth is that it was the Divine revelation that provided the past prophets and their peoples with the general principles for social life in this world and (success) in the hereafter (such as the acts of worship), and the general norms (of good and evil) that would guide the sensible human being towards forming a good society and refraining from injustice, extravagance and supporting the tyrants, etc; and then enjoin them to be members of the society equipped with such guidance and to call for acquiring good and piety, and refraining from evil, indecency and mischief irrespective of the socio-political nature of those societies whether they were governed by oppression of the unjust and tyrants or by benevolence of the just rulers and their organized political systems.

However, no elaborate code of laws was sent down before the advent of Islam except in the Torah which had some laws similar to what was in the Code of Hammurabi. It is true that the Torah was sent down by God to Moses and it was preserved by the Israelites but it is also a fact that they lost it during the conquest of (the Babylonian King) Nebuchadnezzar II (Bakhtnaṣr) who annihilated them, destroyed their Temple and only a few of them survived who were enslaved and taken to Babylon and lived there until (the Persian) King Cyrus (Kūrush) conquered Babylon, emancipated the Israelites and allowed them to return to Jerusalem. Ezra, the High Priest, was allowed to write the Torah for them after its copies had perished and its contents were forgotten, and they had become used to the Babylonian laws that were prevalent among the Chaldeans.

With such a history (of losing the Torah and the rewriting of it in an environment influenced by Babylonian laws) how can it be said that God has endorsed whatever of Hammurabian Code is found in the Jewish laws? The Qur'an confirms only some of what is in the present Torah. Nonetheless, one cannot deny that some man-made laws (established outside the Divine revelation) contain some useful and good laws.

(12) al-Kulaynī narrates in *al-Kāfī* through his chain of narrators from Abū Baṣīr from Abū ʿAbdillāh who explained the verse: *those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice*, as shirk, polytheism.

(13) al-Kulaynī narrates through another chain of narrators from Abū Baṣīr from him (al-Ṣādiq) who explained the verse (and the term 'injustice') as "doubt." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: al-ʿAyyāshī has also narrated this ḥadīth from Abū Baṣīr from him.

(14) al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr* narrates from Abū Baṣīr from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said: "I asked him about the Word ofGod: *those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice.* He said: 'We seek God's protection, O Abū Baṣīr, from being among those who have mixed up their faith with injustice.' Then he said: 'Those are the Khawārij (Khārijites) and their companions.'"

(15) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Jacob b. Shuʿayb from Abū ʿAbdillāh about His's Word: *those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice.* He said: "It means misguidance and whatever is beyond it." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: It seems that the meaning of misguidance in this narration is shirk which is the source of all the injustice and the sins and disobedience beyond it. Or it could refer to the lowest level of injustice which manifest in form of sins, and beyond it would be shirk which is an intensified form of misguidance—after all, all sins are misguidance.

These narrations, as you can see, give multifarious meanings in explaining the term *ẓulm* (injustice) in the verse: idol-worshiping, doubt, and the ideas of the Khawārij; and some narrations have explained it as the love for the enemies of Ahl al-Bayt. All this proves what we had said earlier that the *ẓulm* mentioned in the verse is of a general meaning and it applies to its various levels based on the level of understanding.

The Story of Abraham and His Personality

This section consists of various Qur'anic, academic, historical and other discussions.

1. The Story of Abraham in the Qur'an:

From his childhood until the beginning of his discernible age, Abraham used

to live in isolation from the society of his people. Then he came to them and joined his father, and found him and his people worshiping the idols. He was not pleased with what he saw since his nature was pure and blameless, blessed by God, the Glorified who showed him the truth and the kingdom of everything—in short, the true word and the good deed.

Therefore, Abraham started arguing with his father against worship of the idols and calling him to abandon them and to adopt monotheism of God, Glory be to Him and to follow Him so that He may guide him to the right path and remove him from the control of the Satan. He continued to argue against his father and to insist upon him (to abandon idol worshiping) until the latter scolded him, pushed him away from himself and threatened to stone him if he does not stop criticizing his idols and disliking them.

Abraham, however, was courteous towards his father out of kindness and compassion as he possessed noble character and pleasant speech so he bade him farewell and promised to ask forgiveness for him. Then he separated himself from him, *his people and whatever they worshipped besides Allah,* (19:49).

Thereafter, he argued against the people in matter of idols (21:51–52; 26:69–77; 37:83–87) and argued against others who worshiped the sun, the moon and the star until he proved the truth to them and he came to be known as one who opposed the idols and gods (6:73–82). (This continued without any incident) until one day, the people went for a collective worship out of the town and he pretended to be sick and so didn't go out with them and stayed back. Then he entered the temple of idols and planned to trick them by cutting their idols into pieces except the big one so that they may refer to it when they returned. When the people returned and saw what had happened to their idols, they investigated about the perpetrator. Some of them said that they had heard a young man known as Abraham talking ill of them. They summoned him to their gathering; then brought him to the public so that the people may be witness. They asked him: "Did you do this to our gods, O Abraham?" He replied: "Actually, this big one seems to have done it; ask them, if they can speak?" He had left the big one intact without breaking it into pieces and had placed an axe on its shoulder or something similar to it so that they may see that he (the big idol) is one who has broken the idols.

Abraham had said that while he knew that they did not believe him since they knew that the idol is an inanimate item which cannot speak. He,

however, said whatever he said so that he could say to them: 'Ask them, if they can speak,' in order to make them openly confess that the idols are inanimate objects that do not have life and consciousness. It is then that they turned to one another and said: "Surely you yourselves are the unjust;" and they reflected within themselves and said: "You surely know that they do not speak." He said: "What! Do you worship, besides God, what neither harms you nor helps you? Fie on you and on what you worship besides God! What! Do you not then understand? Do you worship what you curve yourselves while God has created you and what you do?"

They said: "Burn him and help your gods." So they built a pit and started a blaze of fire; all the people joined in this matter and threw him into the fire. God, however, made the fire cool and harmless for him, and defeated their plan. (21:57–71; 37:88–98). It was during these events that he was presented to the king whom people worshiped and considered as a god. The king argued with Abraham about his God. Abraham said: "My Lord gives life and causes death." The king challenged this argument by saying: "I also give life and cause death" by killing one prisoner and releasing another. So, Abraham now argued more clearly so as to nullify his fallacy; he said: "*So surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the east, then make it rise from the west; thus he who disbelieved was confounded,*" (2:258).

When God rescued him from the fire, Abraham started calling the people towards the pure faith, the faith of monotheism. Just a few people believed in him. Among those few, God has named Lot and Abraham's wife with whom he had migrated; he had married her before traveling from his place to the holy land.[1]

Then Abraham and the believers who were with him repudiatedfrom their people, and he personally repudiated from Āzar whom used tocall 'father' but who was not his real father. He then migrated along with his wife and Lot to the holy land so that he may worship God, Glory be to Him, without any hindrance from the unjust and tyrannical group of his people (60:4; 21:71). It was there when God, Glory be Him, gave him the good tidings of

1 The proof of the faith of some of his community members can be seen in: *Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham and those with him when they said to their people,* "*Sure we disassociate from you...*" (60:4); and the proof that he had married before leaving for the holy land can be seen in his prayer for a righteous son from his Lord in: *And he said,* "*Surely I go to my Lord; He will guide me; my Lord! Grant me* (*a son from*) *among the doers of good deeds*" (37:100). (Trans.)

Ishmael and Isaac, and after Isaac, Jacob, while he had become an elderly and reached the old age. Ishmael was born to him, then Isaac, and God, Glory be to Him, blessed him, his two son and their children.

Thereafter, upon the command of his Lord, Abraham went to the land of Mecca that was without any vegetation, and settled his son Ishmael who was an infant (and his mother) therein and then returned to the holy land. Ishmael grew up in Mecca and later on a group from the Arab who lived close by settled around him and that was the beginning of the city of Mecca.

Abraham used to occasionally visit Ishmael in the land of Mecca before the city and the Kaʿbah was established, and even after that (2:126; 14:35–41). Then he built the Kaʿbah, the Sacred House, with the help of Ishmael—that was the first house established for the people from God as a blessing and guidance for the world, in it are clear signs such as the Maqām Ibraḥīm[1]; and whoever enters it will be secure (2:127–129; 3:96–97). He called people for *ḥajj* and instituted the rituals of pilgrimage (22:26–30).

God then ordered him to sacrifice his son Ishmael. So, when his son was with him in the rituals, and when he reached the age of working with him, Abraham said to him: "*O my son! Surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see.*" *He said:* "*O my father! Do what you are commanded; if God pleases, you will surely find me of the patient ones.*" *So when both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, We called out to him saying:* "*O Abraham! You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus do We reward the doers of good.*" (37:101–107)

The last that the Noble Qur'an relates of Abraham's stories are his prayers when he was in Mecca as quoted in the sūrah of Ibraḥīm (14:35–41) which ended with his words: "*O our Lord, forgive me and my parents, and the believers on the day when the reckoning shall come to pass.*"

2. The Status of Abraham Before God, and his State of Worship:

The Almighty God, in His Book, has bestowed upon Abraham the most beautiful of praises, thanked his struggle in His waythe best of thanks, repeatedly mentioned him by name in more than seventy places in His Book,[2]

1 That is, the "Standing Place" of Abraham. (Pub)

2 To be precise, the name of Abraham has occurred sixty-nine times in the Qur'an. Of course, his mention without using his name would be more than that (Trans.)

and enumerated many of His blessings upon him.

Here are some of those blessings: Allah granted him his rectitude before (21:51); selected him in this world (among the chosen ones) and promised that he will be placed among the righteous ones in the Hereafter—this is when his Lord said to him, "*Submit!*" *and he said, "I submit myself to the Lord of the universe;*" (2:130–131). He is the one who made him turn his face towards His Lord being upright, wholly to Him and was not to be among the polytheists (6:79); He is the one granted tranquility to his heart and gave him certainty by showing him God's Kingdom of the heavens and the earth (2:260; 6:75); God took him as His friend (4:125); placed His mercy and blessings upon him and his family, and described him as one who was satisfied (53:37); He praised him as forbearing, tender-hearted and oft- returning (to God) (11:73–75); and He also described him as a nation which was sincerely obedient to God and he was not one of the polytheists, rather he was grateful for His blessings; He chose him and guided him to the right path, He gave him good in this life and promised to place him among the righteous ones in the Hereafter. (16:120–122)

God also described him as a true prophet (19:41); and counted him among His believing servants and among the good ones; and greeted him with peace (37:83–111); and that he is mentioned among those who were men of strength and insight, (38:45–46). God appointed him as a leader for the people (2:124) and made him one of the five Major Prophets who were given the scripture and law (33:7; 42:13; 87:18–19); God gave him the knowledge, the wisdom, the Book, the kingdom, the gifts and gave perpetuity to his descendents. (4:54; 6:74–90; 43:28); and He placed prophethood and revelation among his descendents (57:26), and blessed him with a truthful tongue among the people of the Hereafter (26:84; 19:50).

These are the divine positions and spiritual statuses that Almighty God has bestowed to Abraham; and the Holy Qur'an has not described the qualities of any of the prophet and noble messengers, and their statuses, the way it has fully described his qualities and noble statuses. Refer to the interpretation of each of these positions that we have described in its appropriate place in what has already passed or what I shall, God willing, explain since getting into them at this place would take us away from the purpose of this section.

The Almighty God has preserved Abraham's noble life and religious personality by naming this upright religion as Islam just as Abraham had named it, and He has attributed it to him: *...the faith of your father Abraham;*

he named you Muslims before... (22:78); and he said: *Say:* "*Surely,* (*as for*) *me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path;* (*to*) *a most right religion, the faith of Abraham the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists,*" (6:161).

He also made the Kaʿbah, the Sacred House, that Abraham had built as the *qiblah* of the people, and instituted the *ḥajj* rituals—these are actually rituals that depict the story of him settling his son and his slave-girl (in Mecca) and of sacrificing his son Ishmael and how he strived to move in the direction of the Lord and patiently bore challenges and difficulties for His sake as it was mentioned in the commentary of: *And* (*remember*) *when We made the House a rendezvous for men...* (2:125), in Volume One of this book.[1]

3. Abraham's Blessed Impact in Human Society:

One of his overwhelming impact is that the faith of monotheism, wherever and with whomsoever it exists, is traced back to him. The religions that are today described as monotheistic are: the Jewish faith which is traced to Prophet Moses s/o ʿImrān whose genealogy goes back to Israel who is Jacob s/o of Isaac s/o Abraham; the Christian faith which is traced to Prophet Jesus s/o Mary who is a descendent of Abraham; and the Islamic faith whose founder is the Messenger of God, Muḥammad whose genealogy goes back to Ishmael s/o Abraham. So the belief of monotheism is his noble legacy for the world.

Moreover, in Islam, one can also observe Abraham's teachings such as ritual prayer, charity, pilgrimage, permissibility of eating the meat of cattle, repudiation of God's enemies, the greeting (of peace), the ten rituals about physical cleanliness (five in the head and five in the rest of the body)—those of the head are cutting of the mustache, lengthening the beard, combing the hair, brushing the teeth and using toothpick; those of the body are shaving the bodily hair, circumcision, clipping of the nails, washing the body after major impurity and purifying oneself by water.[2]

A comprehensive search proves that whatever good traditions (in beliefs and deeds) in the human society exist are from the legacy ofthe noble prophethood as we indicated in the previous discussions. Abraham has a positive legacy on all humans of this era irrespective of the fact whether they realize it or not.

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1 Eng. Vol.2 (Pub.)

2 As quoted in *Majma' al-bayān* from *Tafsīr al-Qummī*.

4. Abraham's Story in the Present Torah:

The Torah says: And Te'rah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Hā'ran. Now these are the generations of Te'rah. Te'rah begat Abram, Nahor, and Hā'ran; and Hā'ran begat Lot. And Hā'ran died before his father Te'rah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chāl'dees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name ofAbram's wife was Sā'raī; and the name of Nahor's wife, Mīl'cah, the daughter of Hā'ran, the father of Mīl'cah, and the father of Is'cah. But Sā'raī was barren; she had no child. And Te'rah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Hā'ran, his son's son, and Sā'raī his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chāl'dees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Hā'ran, and dwelt there. And the days of Te'rah were two hundred and five years; and Te'rah died in Hā'ran.[1]

The Torah further says: Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Hā'ran. And Abram took Sā'raī his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Hā'ran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sī'chem, unto the plain of Mŏ'reh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Bĕthel on the west, and Hā'ī on the east; and there he built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sā'raī his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon. Therefore

1 The Book of Genesis, chap.11, vrs.26–32 (Trans.).

it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but thee they will keep alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels.

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sā'raī Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.[1]

Then the Torah says: And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bĕthel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bĕthel and Hā'ī; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Pĕr'izz-īte dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.' And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gŏmor'rah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zō'ar. Then Lot chose him all

1 The Book of Genesis, chap.12, vrs.1–20 (Trans.).

the plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.[1]

It further says: And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gŏmor'rah, and the king of Ad'mah, and the king of Zeboi'im, and the king of Bē'la (the same is Zō'ar;) and they joined battle with them against them in the vale of Sĭd'dĭm; With Chĕd-or-lā'ō-mer the king of Ē'lam, and Tĭ'dal king of nations, and Ăm'ra-phĕl king of Shĭ'när, and A'rī-ŏch king of Ĕl'la-sär; four kings with five. And the vale of Sĭd'dĭm was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gŏmor'rah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gŏmor'rah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.[2]

The Torah says: And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mām're the Ămorīte, brother of Ĕsh'cōl, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hō'bah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.[3]

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chĕd-or-lā'ō-mer and the kings that were with him, at the vale of Shā've h—the same is the King's Vale. And Mĕl-chĭz'e-dĕk king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was thepriest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, 'Blessed beAbram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies intothy hand.' And he gave him tithes of all.

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram: Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, possessor ofheaven and earth,

1 The Book of Genesis, chap.13, vrs.1–12 (Trans.).

2 The Book of Genesis, chap.14, vrs.8–12 (Trans.). 38 The Book of Genesis, chap.14, vrs.13–16 (Trans.).

3 The Book of Genesis, chap.14, vrs.13–16 (Trans.).

That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Ĕsh'cōl, and Mām're, let them take their portion.[1]

Until it says: And Sā'raī Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hā'gär. And Sā'raī said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me frombearing: go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sā'raī. And Sā'raī Abram's wife took Hā'gär her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

And he went in unto Hā'gär, and she conceived: and when she sawthat she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sā'raī said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sā'raī, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sā'raī dealt hardly with her, and she fledfrom her face. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hā'gär, Sā'raī's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sā'raī. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.' And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him;and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seest me? Wherefore the well was called Be'er-la-haī'-roi; behold, it is between Kā'desh and Be'rĕd. And Hā'gär bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hā'gär bare, Ish'mael. And Abram was fourscore and sixyears old, when Hā'gär bare Ish'mael to Abram.[2]

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1 The Book of Genesis, chap.14, vrs.17–24 (Trans.).

2 The Book of Genesis, chap.16, vrs.1–16 (Trans.).

The Torah says: And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.[1]

It further says: And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations...[2]

The Torah says: And God said unto Abraham, As for Sā'raī thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sā'raī, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear

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1 The Book of Genesis, chap.17, vrs.1–8 (Trans.).

2 The Book of Genesis, chap.17, vrs.9–12 (Trans.).

unto thee at this set time in the next year. And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.[1]

Then it narrates the story of the Lord coming with two angels to destroy the inhabitants of Sodom, the people of Lot. They came to Abraham who hosted them and they ate from the food that he had prepared from the calf that he had slaughtered and the curd and milk that he offered them. The angels gave the good news to Sārah of giving birth to Isaac; and they also mentioned the matter of the people of Lot. Abraham tried to dissuade them from destroying them but they convinced him, and then the destruction took place.

The Torah then describes Abraham's move to Ge'rar and how he settled therein and told its king, Abim'e-lech, that Sarah was his sister. The king took Sarah for himself but God came to him in dream and told him not to take someone's wife. He called Abraham and rebuked him for calling his own wife as his sister. Abraham apologized and explained that he had done so out of fear of death. The king returned Sarah to him and gave him plentiful wealth. (Similar to the story of Pharaoh (of Egypt mentioned earlier).)

The Torah says: And the Lord visited Sārah as He had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken. For Sārah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sārah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sārah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham,that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age. And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abrahammade a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.[2]

And Sarah saw the son of Hā'gär the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all

1 The Book of Genesis, chap.17, vrs.15–22 (Trans.).

2 The Book of Genesis, chap.21, vrs.1–8 (Trans.).

that Sārah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.[1]

And Abraham arose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hā'gär, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Be'er-shē'ba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hā'gär out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hā'gär? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad, and he grew; and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.[2]

The Torah continues: And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here am I. And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Mōrī'ah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is

1 The Book of Genesis, chap.21, vrs.9–13 (Trans.).

2 The Book of Genesis, chap.21, vrs.14–21 (Trans.). In Islamic narrations, Ishmael's wife was from the Jurham, a Yemeni tribe. (Auth.)

the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.[1]

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Je-hō'vah-jī'reh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time. And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Be'er-she'ba; and Abraham dwelt at Be'er-she'ba.[2]

Then the Torah describes Isaac's marriage to a girl from his own tribe, and then death of Sārah at the age of 127 years in Hebron, and thereafter Abraham's marriage to Keturah who bore him sons; then it talks about the death of Abraham at the age of 175 years and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah and that is in the present-day city al-Khalil (Hebron).

This is the summary of the stories of Abraham and his life history as seen in the Torah (in the Book of Genesis, chapters 11 to 25). It is necessary for a critical scholar to compare what has come in the Old Testament with Abraham's story in the Holy Qur'an, and then he can form his opinion.

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1 The Book of Genesis, chap.22, vrs.1–8 (Trans.)

2 The Book of Genesis, chapt.22, vrs.9–19 (Trans.).

5. Contradictions & Inconsistencies in Torah's Narration:

The inconsistencies in the sentences of the story mentioned in the Torah and contradictions in its conclusions confirm what the Holy Qur'an says that the Bible has been subjected to interpolation.

First: The major flaw in the story is that it has neglected to describe his early struggles and his arguments with his people, and the trials and tribulations that they inflicted upon him; and these are the shinning aspects of his history.

Among its flaws of neglect is Abraham's task of building the Sacred Ka'bah, declaring it as a secure sanctuary, and instituting the pilgrimage. No religious scholar or a social critic would doubt that this ancient structure which continues to stand on its foundations since 4000 years is from the major Divine signs that reminds the people of Almighty God, it has preserved the truth for a long time, and it is the first house of Almighty God that was established for the people as a source of blessing and guidance for the world.

This neglect stems from nothing but the Israelite bias of the writers and authors of the Torah that pushed them to erase any mention of the Ka'bah and only to enumerate the altars of sacrifice that Abraham built in Shechem (present day Nablus), East Jerusalem, and the hill of the Lord.

(This is also reflected) in the way they have described the noble prophet, Ishmael: that he was a wild ass of a man against every man and every man's hand against him; and that he had no nobility rather he was banished by his father, and grew up becoming an archer! They desire to extinguish with their mouths the light of God; *but God will perfect His Light* (Qur., 61:8).

Second: Among other flaws of the Torah is that it attributes actions to Abraham that do not fit the status of prophethood or the spirit of righteousness and magnanimity: for example, the statement that Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine to Abraham and blessed it; and he was the priest of God the Most High.[1]

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1 Some commentators have explained this by saying that this Melchizedek was the same as Amraphel, the king of Shinar, mentioned in the earlier part of the story, and that he was actually Hammurabi, the author of the Hammurabi Code, who was from the early kings of Babylon.
There is a great dispute about the time-frame of Hammurabi's reign, and most of what is said about him does not does fit the era of Abraham's lifetime who lived 2000 BC. For example, in the book *al-'Arab qablu al-Islām* it said that

Third: Among its inconsistencies is that Abraham, in one instance, told the princes of Pharoah of Egypt that Sārah was his sister (and he advised her to support his statement by saying to her: "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee.") And, in another instance, he told Abimelech, the king of Gerar, that Sārah was his sister. So the Pharoah took her as a wife once, and then Abimelech took her as a wife the second time. And in the first case, he explains away his statement as "his sister in faith" and in the other case as "his father's daughter from a woman other than his mother."

The mildest conclusion of Abraham's statement (that does not fit the status of one who was God's friend) is that he was presenting his wife to the Pharoah and Abimelech deceitfully so that they make take her as their wife while she is a married woman! He does this in order to acquire precious gifts and gain the wealth from them both!

All this in spite of the Torah's clear statement that Sārah, at that time and in particular when Abimelech took her, was an old woman of seventy years or more—an age when normally a woman loses the grace of her youthfulness and the purity of her beauty. Moreover, the flamboyant kings and the tyrants are attracted only to young girls who are exceptionally beautiful and stunningly gorgeous.

Fourth: Comparing such Narrations in Hadith Literature:

Similar stories can be seen in the narrations of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet said:

Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions. Twice for the sake of God when he said: *I am sick*, and he said: (I have not done this but) *the big idol has done it.* The (third was) that while Abraham and Sārah were going

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Hammurabi reigned in Babylon in years 2232–2287 BC while in the Hammurabi Code, as quoted in *Aqdam sharāyiʿ al-ʿālam* by F. Edward, it says that his reign was in years 2167–2205 BC; and yet the *Qāmūs aʿlāmi al-sharq wa al-gharb* says that he reigned in Babylon in the years 1686–1727 BC, and the *Qāmūsu al-Kitābi al-muqaddas* says that he reigned in 1920–1975 BC.

The most obvious proof that denies the suggestion (that Melchizedek was Hammurabi) is the discovery of the rock in the ruins of Babylon that has the Hammurabi Code which contains names of the Babylonian idols—this proves that Hammurabi was an idol-worshiper and he could not have been the priest of God the Most High. (Auth.)

(on a journey) they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant, "This man (that is, Abraham) is accompanied by a very charming lady." So, he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sārah saying: "Who is this lady?" Abraham said: "She is my sister." Abraham went to Sārah and said: "O Sārah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and me. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, so don't contradict my statement." The tyrant then called Sārah and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but (his hand got stiff and) he was confounded. He asked Sārah: "Pray to God for me, and I shall not harm you." So Sārah asked God to cure him and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but (his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and) was more confounded. He again requested Sārah: "Pray to God for me, and I will not harm you." Sārah asked God again and he became alright. He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said: "You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil." The tyrant then gave Hājar as a girl-servant to Sārah.

Sārah came back (to Abraham) while he was praying. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked: "What has happened?" She replied, "God has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and gave me Hājar for service."

(Abū Hurayrah then addressed his listeners saying, "That (Hājar) was your mother, O Banū Mā'u al-Samā' (that is, the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, Hājar's son))."

There is a ḥadīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* through multiple narrators from Anas and Abū Hurayrah, in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from Abū Hurayrah and Ḥudhayfah, in Musnad of Aḥmad from Anas, Ibn ʿAbbās, and it has also been produced by al-Ḥākim from Ibn Masʿūd, by al-Ṭabarānī from ʿUbādah b. al-Ṣāmit and Ibn Abī Shaybah from Salmān, by al-Tirmidhī from Abū Hurayrah, and by Abū ʿAwānah from Ḥudhayfah from Abū Bakr—the ḥadīth of intercession of the Holy Prophet on the Day of Resurrection. It is a long narration which says that the people will approach the prophets, one after another, asking them for intercession with God; and whenever they would approach a prophet and ask him for intercession, he will send them to the next prophet and apologize because of his mistakes until they reach to the Last of the Prophet, Muhammad, who will positively respond to their plea. In that narration, it says that when they will approach Abraham asking him to intercede on their behalf with God, he will say to them: "I am

not fit for this because I have lied three times," referring to his statements: "I am sick", "the big idol has done this" and "tell him that I am your brother."

Proper reflection does not support the contents of these two narrations, as mentioned by some researchers. If the narrations suggest that the three statements described as lies were not outright lies but kind of double-entendre and amazing expositions (as eluded in some words of the narration in some versions of the Prophet's saying that, "Abraham did not utter a lie except three, all of them for the sake of God"; and his description that, "none of them are lie, rather they are for support for God's religion")—then why did Abraham, in the narration of the Day of Resurrection, count them as his sins and as barriers for intercession, and apologizes on that account? Moreover, with such an interpretation, the lies would be counted as his struggles for the sake of God and as his good deeds for the faith, if at all it were permissible for any prophet to lie for the sake of the faith. However, you know from the previous discussion on "Prophethood" in volume two[1] of this book that lying is absolutely not permissible for prophets since it will totally erode the trust in their information (from the Divine revelation) and statements.

If such types of statement can be considered as a lie and a barrier from intercession with Almighty God, then Abraham's statement when he saw the star, the moon and the sun, "this is my Lord, this is my Lord" is more deserving of being described as a lie that prevents intercession that stems from nearness to Almighty God.

Furthermore, Abraham's statement quoted by the Almighty God, *Then he looked at the stars, looking up once, then he said, "Surely I am sick."* (37:88–89), is devoid of any context that shows that it was a lie and unreal; it is most probable that he was sick with a kind of illness that did not prevent him from smashing the idols.

Similarly, when the people asked him: "*Have you done this to our gods, O Abraham?*" he answered them (while they knew that the idols were inanimate items devoid of any sense or will), "*Surely this their chief must have done it;*" and then added the remarks, "*therefore ask them, if they can speak*"—this cannot be counted as a lie since it is a statement in circumstances of rebuke in order to lead the opponent to accept the error in his views. And so the people had no way out but to confess by saying: "*Certainly you know that*

1 See *al-Mīzān*, Eng. transl., vol.3. (Trans.)

they do not speak." That is when Abraham said: "*What! Do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you? Fie on you and on what you serve besides Allah...?*" (21:62–67).

If the narration intends to say that the three statements of Abraham were real lies, then that would constitute an obvious denial of the Book of Almighty God! We leave that to the understanding of a serious scholar by referring to the second section of this discussion on "Abraham's status with God and his state of worship" that God has praised him with the best of praises and appreciated him in the best way. How can the mind of a serious scholar accept or apply the words of the Almighty: *And mention Abraham in the Book; surely he was a truthful* (*man*)*, a prophet* (19:41) on a lying person who easily lies when he finds himself in difficulties? How can God shower those noble praises upon a person who does not care about Him in matters of right or truthfulness? Exalted is the personality of God's friend from such thoughts!

As for the reports narrated from the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt, they affirm the substance of the story of the Torah but they exalt Abraham beyond any attribution of lie and other actions that are not appropriate for his noble character.

The most comprehensive story of Abraham appears in *al-Kāfī*: (al-Kulaynī) from ʿAli (b. Ibraḥīm) from his father and a number of our companions from Sahl (b. Ziyād), altogether from (al-Ḥasan) b. Maḥbūb from Abraham b. (Abī) Zayd al-Karkhī who said: I heard Abū ʿAbdillāh (al-Ṣādiq) saying:

"Verily Abraham was born in Kūthā-Rubā[1] and his father hailed from that place. The mother of Abraham and the mother of Lot, Sārah, and Waraqah (or Ruqayyah) were sisters who were daughters of Lāḥij;and Lāḥij was a prophet (*nabī*) but not a messenger (*rasūl*).

During his youth, Abraham was on the religion of *fitra* (the innate faith that Almighty God has created within the people) till He guided him to His religion and chose him.

He married Sārah, the daughter of Lāḥij, thus she was his maternal cousin. Sārah owned many sheep, vast land and had good status (financially). She gave all her possessions to Abraham who managed it, improved it; and

1 It was a suburb of Kūfah, and al-Jazarī (in *Muʿjamu al-buldān*, vol.4, p.487) has written it as 'Kūthī.' (Auth.)

the sheep and the agricultural produce increased to the extent that there was no one in Kūthā-Rubā more financially stable than him.

When Abraham smashed the idols of Nimrod, the latter ordered him to be arrested and tied, and prepared an enclosure (for firebond) which was filled with firewood and the fire was lit in it. Then he ordered Abraham to be thrown into the fire to burn him. Then they waited for the fire to die out and then went to the enclosure—lo, they found Abraham safe from the bounds.

When Nimrod was informed of this, he ordered to exile Abraham from the town and to prevent him from taking his sheep and possessions. So, Abraham protests against it and said: "If you take away my sheep and my wealth, then it is right upon you that you should return to me the time of my life that I spent in your town." They took the issue to the judge of Nimrod who pronounced the judgement that Abraham should hand over what he has acquired in their town and that Nimrod's people should return to Abraham whatever of his life he spent in their town. Nimrod was told of this judgement and he ordered them to leave him, his sheep and his wealth alone but to expel him (from the town). He said: "If he says in your town, he will corrupt your religion and harm your gods." So, they expelled Abraham along with Lot (peace be upon both) from their land towards Syria. So, Abraham left with Lot (who did not part from him) and Sārah. He said to them: "*Surely I am going to my Lord; He will guide me,*" (37:99) that is to al-Quds.

Abraham took his sheep and wealth, and made a box and placed Sārah into it and locked it tightly out of sense of honour of her. He travelled until he left the realm of Nimrod and reached the domain of an Egyptian known as ʿArārah. Then he passed by the tithe collector who approached him to tax his possessions. When the tithe collector reached to the box, he said to Abraham: "Open this box so that we can tax what is in it." Abraham said: "Estimate whatever you like of gold or silver that can be in it so that we pay its tithe but don't open the box." The tithe collector insisted to open it. Abraham angrily opened the box. When Sārah—who was known for her beauty appeared to him, the tithe collector asked: "What is this woman to you?" Abraham said: "She is my wife and my maternal cousin." The tithe collector asked: "What caused you to hide her in the box?" Abraham said: "Out of sense of honour for her so that no one sees her." The tithe collector said: "I will not leave you till I inform the king about you and her."

The collector sent a messenger to the king with the information. The

king sent a word to bring the box to him. When they came to take the box with them, Abraham said: "I will not leave the box until my soul leaves my body." They informed the king about him who said: "Bring him as well as the box with him."

So, they brought him, the box and all his possessions to the king. The king asked for the box to be opened. Abraham said: "O the King, in it is my wife and my maternal cousin. I am willing to sacrifice all that I have instead of opening it." The king forced Abraham to open it. When he saw Sārah, his conscience was not able to restrain his foolishness from extending his hand towards her. Abraham placed himself between him and her out of sense of honour and said: "O God! Prevent his hand from my wife and maternal cousin." His hand froze, neither could he reach her nor take it back towards himself. The king said: "Is it your Lord who has done this to me?" He said: "Yes; my Lord has sense of honour and dislikes something forbidden; He is the One Who has come between you and the immoral act that you intended to do." The king said: "Ask your Lord to return to me my hand (as normal); if He responds positively, I shall not touch her." Abraham: "O my Lord! Restore to him his hand so that he may stay away from my wife." The Almighty God restored his hand. The king then looked to her with his eyes, and then turned towards her with his hand. Abraham placed himself before him out of sense of honour and prayed: "O God! Prevent his hand from her." The king's hand became stiff (again) and couldn't reach her. The king said to Abraham: "Indeed your Lord has sense of honour and so do you; ask your Lord to restore my hand; if He does so, I will not repeat (my mistake)." Abraham said: "I will pray to Him provided you don't ask me again to pray if you do the mistake again." The king said to him: "Yes." Abraham said: "O God: If is he true, then restore his hand." And so his hand was restored.

When the king saw the sense of honour and the (Divine) sign concerning his hand, he gave importance to Abraham, respected him, honoured him and extended protection to him. He said to him: "You are indeed secure from me as far as she is concerned or whatever that you possess; so go wherever you wish. But I have a request of you." Abraham said: "What is it?" He said: "I want you to allow me to serve her (Sārah) through a beautiful and intelligent Egyptian (slave) who will be her maid." Abraham agreed to it. So, the king called the maid and gifted her to Sārah; that maid was Hājar, the mother of Ishmael.

Abraham continued his journey with all his possessions. (While biding

Abraham farewell,) the king walked behind him out of respect and honour for him. So, the Exalted God revealed to Abraham to stop and not walk ahead of a arrogant ruler, rather he should walk behind him as I have placed him ahead of you; so walk behind him out of respect and honour for him as he is in control and there must be a chief in the land, whether good or evil.

So, Abraham stopped and said to the king: "Go forward as my Lord has revealed to me momentarily to respect and honour you, and to place you ahead of myself and to walk behind you out of respect for you." The king said: "He revealed to you this?" Abraham said: "Yes." The king said: "I testify that your Lord is Friendly, Forbearing and Generous, and you are indeed attracting me to your faith."

The king then bade farewell to him. Abraham travelled until he reached northern part of Shćmćt (Greater Syria) and left Lot in the southern part of Shāmāt.

When Abraham was delayed in getting a child, he said to Sārah: "If you wish, you can sell Hājar (to me) hopefully, God can bless us with a child through her, and so he shall be an offspring for us." So Abraham bought Hājar from Sārah, had relations with her, and thereafter Ishmael was born.[1]

Fifth: Who was the Sacrifice: Ishmael or Isaac?

Among the inconsistences of what has been mentioned in the Torah is the story of the sacrifice that the child to be sacrificed was Isaac and not Ishmael. It is so while the story of settling Ishmael in the land of Tahāmah (that is, Mecca), building the Sacred Kaʿbah, instituting the ritual of pilgrimage which talks about suffering and hardships that he and his mother faced for the sake of God, and the *ṭawāf* (circumambulation around the Kaʿbah), the *saʿī* (walking between the hills of Ṣafā and Marwah), and the ritual of sacrifice—all these confirm that the sacrificed one was Ishmael and not Isaac.

The Gospel of Barnabas says that Jesus rebuked the Jews for their statement that the sacrificed one was Isaac and not Ishmael. In its chapter 44 (verses 11–12), it says: "Then spake God, saying to Abraham: 'Take thy son, thy first born Ishmael, and come up the mountain to sacrifice him.' How is Isaac first born, if when Isaac was born Ishmael was seven years old?"

As for the Qur'an, its verses are almost clear that the sacrificed son was

1 *al-Kāfī*, vol.8, p.370–373; in its new edition produced and annotated by Dāru al-Ḥadīth (Qum), see vol.15, p.815–819 (Trans.)

Ishmael. After describing the story of smashing the idols and him being put in the fire that Almighty had made cool and safe, He says:

And they desired to outwit him (*Abraham*) *but We made them the lowest. And he said, "Surely I go to my Lord: He will guide me. My Lord! Grant me* (*a son from*) *among the doers of good deeds." So We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy. And when he reached* (*the age of*) *working with him, he said, "O my son! Surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see." He said, "O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will surely find me of the patient ones." So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, We called out to him* (*saying*)*: "O Abraham! You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus do We reward the doers of good. Most surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice; and We perpetuated* (*praise*) *to him among the later generations. Peace be upon Abraham; thus do We reward the doers of good; surely he was of Our believing servants. And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet among the good ones. And We showered Our blessings on him and on Isaac; and of their offspring are the doers of good, and* (*also*) *those who are clearly unjust to their own soul,* (37:98–113).

Anyone who reflects on the holy verses has no choice but to accept that the sacrificed son whose birth was annunciated by the Glorified God in His Words (*So We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy*), and that the other annunciation which He mentioned later on in that passage (*We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet among the good ones*) is different from the first good tiding. The latter good news was about Isaac which is other than the one annunciated earlier and which is linked to the story of sacrifice.

The narrations in the Shīʿī sources from the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt say that the sacrificed son was Ishmael whereas the narrations from the Sunnī sources are different: some mention Ishmael and others mention Isaac. However, you know that the first set of narrations are in accordance to the Qur'an.

al-Ṭabarī, in his *al-Tārīkh*, says: "The early scholars of the community of our Prophet Muḥammad differ on the son that Abraham was ordered to sacrifice. Some of them say that it was Isaac while the others say it was Ishmael. Indeed, both types of narrations have come from the Messenger of God. If there were an authentic narration among them, we don't need to refer to the other (but it is not so). However, the proof from the Qur'an about validity of the narration which says that it was Isaac is more clear and

obvious compared to the other version."

He goes on to say: "As for the proof from the Qur'an that we said earlier that the narration of Isaac is more correct, is based on Almighty's statement informing us of His friend Abraham's prayer when he left from his people and migrated towards his Lord towards Greater Syria with his wife Sārah. He said: *'Surely I go to my Lord: He will guide me. My Lord! Grant me* (*a son from*) *among the doers of good deeds.'* This was before he came to know Hājar and before Ishmael's mother came to him. Our Exalted Lord then continues the narration about accepting Abraham's prayer and giving him the good news of a forbearing son, and then Abraham's dream that he is sacrificing his son when he reached the age of working.

"And we don't know of any good news given to Abraham in the Qur'an about a male child except Isaac; and that is His Word: *'And his wife was standing* (*by*)*, so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Isaac and after Isaac of Jacob'* (11:71). And His words: *So he conceived in his mind a fear on account of them. They said: 'Fear not.' And they gave him the good news of a boy possessing knowledge. Then his wife came up in great grief, and she struck her face and said: 'And old barren woman!'* (51:28–29).

"This is so because in all instances that the good news of a son to Abraham has been mentioned, God's good news to him is mentioned in relation to his wife Sārah. Therefore, it follows that the good news in His word: *So We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy* is similar to other instances in the Qur'an which talks about the good news given to him from his wife Sārah.

"The objection that God did not order the sacrifice of Isaac and that the good news from God about his birth and birth of Jacob came after him the sacrifice does not support the validity of what has been alleged otherwise. This is so because Almighty God indeed ordered Abraham to sacrifice Isaac after Isaac reached the age of working; and it is possible that Jacob was born before Isaac's father was ordered to sacrifice him.

"Similarly, there is no ground for the objection to allege otherwise on basis of the sheep's horn seen hanging in the Kaʿbah since it is not improbable that it was carried from Greater Syria to the Kaʿbah and was hung in it."

I wish I could know how al-Ṭabarī was oblivious to the fact that when Abraham prayed to his Lord for a son (when he migrated towards Greater Syria while Sārah was with him and there was no news of Hājar at that time), he prayed in the following words: *My Lord! Grant me* (*a son from*) *among*

the doers of good deeds—he asked his Lord for a son but did not specify that he be granted through Sārah in order to link the good news that followed thereafter to the good news about Isaac. He just said: "My Lord! Grant me..." and did not say, "My Lord, grant me through Sārah..."

As for al-Ṭabari's statement that it is well known from other instances in the Qur'an that the good news was about Isaac and therefore the good news in this case should also be applied to him (and we shall discuss those instances later one)—this is itself a supposition without any proof. Rather the proof is against him because Almighty God, in these verses, mentioned the good news of "a forbearing son" followed by the story of sacrifice, and then again mentioned the good news regarding Isaac. No one who reflects on the context of these verses would doubt that the subject of the second good news is other than that of the first good news. Abraham was given the good news, before Isaac, of another son and that is none other than Ishmael. The narrators, the reporters and the historians are all unanimous that Ishmael was born to Abraham before Isaac.

Sixth: Among the examples of inconsistence is the obvious contrast in what the Torah says about Ishmael: it clearly says that Ishmael was born to Abraham before Isaac by almost fourteen years and (then it says) that Abraham banished him and his mother Hājar after Isaac's birth when he laughed at Sārah. Then it continues the story of their settlement in the desert and the running out of water that Hājar was carrying and about Ishmael's thirst, and that the angel showed her the water. Any serious reader of this story of Ishmael can discern that he must have been a breast-feeding infant at that time. So, you should reflect and ponder over those verses (quoted earlier from The Book of Genesis, chap. 21, vrs. 14–21). And this is in accordance to what has come in our narrations.

6. The Torah Ignores Ishmael

The Holy Qur'an gives the best of attention to the story of Abraham himself as well as in relation to his two noble sons, Ishmael, Isaac and their descendants. This is contrary to what we see in the Torah which exclusively pays attention to Isaac and the Israelite people while it does not pay attention to Ishmael except to put him down and to degrade his status. Even the sparse mention that it has in this regard is not without inner inconsistences: it once mentions the Exalted God address to Abraham that 'verily your remaining

descendants will be from Isaac;' and then in another instance, it quotes His address that 'verily God will bless your descendants from seed of Ishmael and make him a great nation.' On the one hand, it describes him as a wild ass constantly fighting the people and the people fighting him, who grew up as an archer, banished from his father's home, and on the other hand, it says that God is with him!

7. Two Objections on the Qur'anic Narration of Abraham:

By pondering on what we said about the story of Abraham in the Qur'an, the response to two objections raised against the Holy Book will be clear.

First Objection: Some of the Orientalists have made an observation that the Qur'an, in its Meccan chapters, does not mention Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them both) except in the way it mentions other prophets that they were on the monotheistic path, warning the people (against polytheism) and calling them toward the Glorified God. It does not mention the building of the Ka'bah and its connection to Ishmael, and that both (the father and the son) were calling the Arab people to the religion of nature and pure faith. However, the Medinan chapters such as al-Baqarah, al-Ḥajj and other chapters describes the father-son relationship of Abraham and Ishmael, and presents them as fathers of the Arab people to whom they introduced the religion of Islam and as builders of the Ka'bah, the Sacred House of God.

"And the reason for this difference is that Muḥammad relied on the Jews in Mecca. But so when they constantly took an antagonistic stand against him (in Medina); he had to find other supporters. This is when his shrewdness lead him to a new appraisal of Abraham as the father of Arabs—this is how he was able to distance himself from the Jews of his own time and establish his ties with 'Jewishness' of Abraham by considering him as the father of the Arabs, the founder of their religion (Islam), and the builder of their holy mosque in Mecca, a city which was preoccupation of his mind."[1]

Reply: The Orientalists have degraded themselves by attributing such a lie to the Noble Qur'an, a book which is universally known and is not hidden to any Easterner or Westerner. Any serious scholar will notice that the Holy Qur'an does not flatter any polytheist or Jew or Christian neither in Meccan chapter nor in Medinan chapter; and its tone in rebuking the Jews and others

1 This has been quoted by al-Najjār in Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā' (Beirut: *Iḥyā al-Turāthi al-'Arabī*, n.d.; p.73–74) from (Snouk) Hurgronje and (Arent Jan) Wensinck in (the Arabic version of) the Encyclopedia of Islam (vol.1, p.28). (Auth.)

does not change because of it Meccan or Medinan time of revelation.

However, since the Qur'anic verses were revealed gradually according to the events related to the religious call and since the challenges related to Jewish community occurred (in Medina) after the migration, obviously any remark about them and any explanation about their antagonistic attitude will be found in the verses that were revealed in numerous Medinan chapters. This is similar to the details of the religious laws that were revealed in Medina whenever the need was felt in relation to the events unfolding.

As for the claim of two Orientalists that any mention of the relation-ship of Ishmael to Abraham, the building of the Kaʿbah and the establish-ment of the pure religion (of monotheism) is to be only found in the Medinan chapters, this is rejected by what the Almighty God has saidin sūrah of Ibraḥīm, a Meccan chapter, when He quotes the prayer of Abraham: *And when Abraham said, "My Lord! Make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols...O our Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley uncultivated near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! That they may establish prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful... Praise be to Allah, Who gave me in old age Ishmael and Isaac; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer."* (14:35–39) Similar verses revealed in sūrah of al-Ṣāffāt were quoted earlier about the story of the sacrifice.

As for the 'Jewishness' of Abraham, the Qur'an rejects that affiliation in the Word of the Almighty: *O people of the Book! Why do you dispute about Abraham, when the Torah and the Injīl were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?...Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian, but he was* (*an*) *upright* (*man*)*, a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists.* (3:65–67)

Second Objection: The Sabaeans, the star-worshipers who have been mentioned in the Qur'an when Abraham confronted their gods by saying: *So when the night over-showed him, he saw a star; he said, "This is my Lord..."* lived in the city of Ḥarrān to which Abraham migrated from Babylon or from Ur. This means that his argument with the star-worshipers took place a while after his argument with idol-worshipers, the smashing of the idols, and him being put into the fire. This does not correspond to what appears in the Qur'anic verses that the arguments with the idol-worshipers and the star-worshipers happened altogether in two days within his arrival to his father and his people as discussed earlier.

Reply: This criticism is actually related to the interpretation that

occurred in explanation of the relevant verses and not to the Qur'an itself.

Nonetheless, the critic has ignored the conclusions of history and the correct reflection in this matter.

As for the point of reflection: The religion of the Sabaeans was prevalent and famous in some major cities of the country those days, and so its presence in its other cities and the spread of its adherents in its various regions is not that a far-fetched idea.

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8. A Brief History of the Sabaeans:

As far as history is concerned, it talks about the spread of the Sabaean faith like the spread of idol-worshiping in Babylon and the presence of many temples built in the names of the stars, and their corresponding idols were placed therein. The history of Babylon and its surrounding area talks about the temple of the sun-god and the moon-god around 3200 BC; and the names of the sun-god and the moon-god can even be seen carved in the Code of Hammurabi that was close to the era of Abraham.

We have earlier quoted from *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah* of Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī[1] that Yudhasaf appeared in India at the end of the first year of the reign of Tahmūrth; and he invented the (ancient) Persian script, and called the people to the Sabaean religion and a great many people followed him. It was also mentioned that the Pishdadian kings and some of the Kayanis who resided in Balkh held the sun, the moon, the planets, and the other elements in high esteem until Zoroaster appeared at the end of the thirtieth year of Peshtasav's reign.

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al-Bīrūnī's discussion continued to the point where he said that the Sabaeans attributed the management of all affairs to the sky and the heavenly bodies, and believed that they are living things having the characteristics of speech, hearing and sight; they revered the light. One of their legacies is the dome above the niche in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus: it was their prayer house, and at that time even the Greeks and the Romans followed the same religion. With the passage of time, it came under Jewish control and they turned it into a synagogue. Later the Christians took it over and converted it into a church. Then came the Muslims, and they made it into a mosque.

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He further said that the Sabaeans had numerous places of worships, and

1 See *al-Mīzān* (Eng. transl.), vol.1, under "A Historical Discussion" (2:62), (Trans.)

their idols were named after various names of the sun, and were shaped with fixed patterns, as mentioned by Abū Maʿshar al-Balkhī in his book, *Buyūt al-ʿibādāt*. For example, there was a temple of Baʿlbak that housed the idol of the sun; a temple of Qirān that was related to the moon and was built in its shape like a shawl worn over head and shoulders. And there was a village nearby, Salamsīn by name which is corruption of its original name, Ṣanam Sīn, the idol of the moon; likewise, there was another village called Tarʿūz, that is, the gate of Venus.

They also claim that the Kaʿbah and its idols belonged to them and that the Meccan idol-worshipers were adhering to the Sabaean religion; and that Lāt (the (famous) idol) was named after Saturn and ʿUzza (another (famous) idol) was named after Venus. This is the summary of Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī's statement from *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*.

al-Masʿūdī says that the Sabaean religion perhaps evolved from idol-worshiping, and that it evolved from idol-worshiping perhaps because of the similarity in their origins. The idol-worshipers were worshiping the idols of the sun, the moon, the Venus and other stars in order to seek nearness to their gods and from them to the Supreme God.

al-Masʿūdī, in *Murūj al-dhahab,* says that most of the people of India, China and others nations believed that God, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, was a physical entity, and that angels have bodies with fixed dimensions and weights; they believed that God, the Sublime and His angels where concealed by the sky. This prompted them to adopt images and idols of various forms and shapes that they worshiped as representation of God's image or the angels' image, and some were in image of human being, etc. They used to offer sacrifices to the idols and made vows regarding them as a way of seeking nearness to the Almighty.

They continued on this for some time until some wise men among them pointed out to them that the planets and the stars were closest visible entities to Almighty God, and that they had characteristics of life and speech; and that the angels were the link between them and God. They also believed that whatever happens on this earth is the reflection of the movement of the stars based on God's command. So, they started venerating the stars and offering sacrifices to them so that they may benefit them. This continued for some time.

When they saw that the stars disappeared during the daytime and sometimes in the night also because of atmospheric obstructions, some of their

wise men suggested to them to make idols and statues in image of the stars—and so they ended up making idols and statues based on the number of the bigger and famous stars. Each group of them started venerating one of those stars and offering sacrifices to it that was different from what was offered by others. They believed that if they venerate the idols that they had carved, the seven celestial bodies will do for them whatever they wished. And they built an exclusive temple for each idol and named the temples by the names of those stars.

Some believe that the Sacred House (in Mecca) is the temple of the Saturn; and that this House has survived during the passing eras and venerated during most of its history because it is the temple of the Saturn; and the Saturn has protected it since longevity and stability is from its characteristics. They believed that anything related to the Saturn will not perish. They also believed in other superstitions whose narration here will tire the reader.

Anyhow, with the passage of time, they started worshiping the idols as a means of seeking nearness to God and abandoned the worship of the stars. They continued in this way until Yudhāsaf appeared in India. Yudhāsaf, an Indian, then left India for Sind and then went to Sajistān and Zābulistān (these were ruled of Fīrūz bin Kabak), and then he went back to Sind and then to Kirmān. Then he claimed to be a prophet and thought that he was God's messenger, and an intermediary between God and the people. He came to Persia at the beginning of the reign of Tahmūrth, the Persian king; some say that it was in reign of King Jam. Yudhāsaf is the first to start the Sabaean traditions as we mentioned earlier in this book.

Yudhāsaf called people towards asceticism in this world, and to concentrate on the higher spiritual realm that is the origin of the human souls and is considered the heart of this world. By proposing some specious arguments, he revived the worship and veneration of the idols among the people; and by using a variety of deceitful and dubious means, he justified idol-worshiping in their minds.

Those who are expert in this area and this era of history say that it was King Jim (of Pishdadian dynasty) who glorified the fire and called the people to venerate it. He used to say that the fire resembles the light of the Sun and the stars, and light was in his views better than darkness. He also believed that light has a variety of degrees. Those who came after him went their different ways in venerating whatever they thought would get them closer to the Almighty God.

al-Masʿūdī then describes their major temples which were seven in

number: The Kaʿbah was the temple of Saturn; a temple at the top of Mars mount near Isfahan; the temple of Mandustān in India; the temple of Nawbahār, near Balakh, named after the Moon; the temple of Ghamdān, in Sanʿā' (Yemen), named after Venus; the temple of Kāwsān, in Farghānah, named after the Sun; a temple in highlands of China, named after the First Cause. And there were major temples in Greece, Rome and in the lands of the Slavs that were named after the stars such as the temple of Venus in Tunis.

Then al-Masʿūdī mentions that the Sabaeans of Ḥarrān[1] had temples named after the substantial ideas and stars such as the temple of the First Cause, the temple of intellect, the temple of chain (of cause and effect), the temple of physical form, and the temple of soul—all these were build in a circular form. Then there was the temple of Saturn in hexagonal form, the temple of Jupiter in a triangle form, the temple of Mars in a square form, the temple of the Sun in a square form, the temple of Mercury in a triangle form, the temple of Venus which was internally in a triangle form and externally in a square form, and the temple of Moon in an octagon form. As we mentioned earlier, the Sabaean has codes and secrets that they conceal (from others). This is the end of what al-Masʿūdī had said and it is similar to what al-Shahristānī has mentioned in his *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*.

From what we have described, the following become clear:

Firstly, the polytheists who worshiped idols as their gods also worshiped images of stars, the sun and the moon, and that they had temples named after them. Therefore, it is possible that Abraham's argument against the stars, the moon and the sun was with the polytheists who believed in them also and not with the Sabaeans. It is also possible that it was against some Sabaeans in the city of Babylon or Ur or Kūthā-Rabā as mentioned in some narrations quoted earlier.

The story as narrated in the Holy Qur'an apparently shows that Abraham argued against his father and his people, and patiently endured their aggression for the sake of God until he separated himself from them and abandoned them by emigrating from their land towards the holy land without first diverting his journey to Ḥarrān and then from there to the holy land. What the history books have said about his migration first to Ḥarrān and then from Ḥarrān to the holy land has no basis other than the Torah or some

1 Since Sabaean faith was prevalent in Ḥarrān, the Sabaeans were also known as Ḥarrāniyūn. (Auth.)

unreliable reports from the Israelite spittles—this is obvious to anyone who ponders upon Tārīkh of al-Ṭabarī and other sources. Moreover, some sources[1] mention that the Ḥarrān described in the Torah was a city near Babylon between Euphrates and Khābūr, and that it is other than the present-day Ḥarrān which is near Damascus.

Yes, al-Masʿūdī mentions that the remnant of the major Sabaeans' temples during this time—that is year 332 AH—is a temple in the city of Ḥarrān at the Bāb al-Raqqah known as Maghlitiyā and that is known among them as the temple of Āzar, the father of Abraham (al-Khalīl). The Sabaeans have many stories on Āzar and his son Abraham—of course; none of their statements has any validity.

Secondly, just as the polytheists were sometimes worshiping the sun, the moon and the stars, similarly the Sabaeans erected places of worship and temples for worship of entities other than the stars, the moon and the sun. They even established temples for the First Cause, the intellect, the soul, etc., just like the idol-worshipers and sought nearness to them. Herodotus, in his *History*, describes the temple (of Jupiter) in Babylon that it consisted of eight towers raised upon one another and that the topmost tower had a spacious temple, and inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side. There were no statue of any kind set up in the temple, nor was the temple occupied of nights by anyone except a single whom the people affirmed to be chosen by God for service and companionship.[2]

Perhaps this temple (at the eighth tower of Babylon) was dedicated to the First Cause which is devoid of any shapes and images even though sometimes they would portray Him as per their own imaginations as mentioned by al-Masʿūdī. It is confirmed that their philosophers deemed Almighty God above the physical forms, shapes and material attributes, and described Him with appropriate qualities. These philosophers, however, were afraid of the masses in expressing their true belief about God either because the people did not have the capacity to understand that aspect or because of political expediency and interest that compelled them to hide the truth.

(Chapter 6 continues in Eng. Vol. 14)

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1 *Qāmusu al-kitābi al-muqaddis* under "Ḥarrān."

2 The History of Herodotus, a Greek historian of circa 500 BC. (See The History of Herodotus, translated and edited by George Rawlinson, vol.1 (NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1885) bk.1, ch.179.)